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FEBRUARY 1982 NUMBER 48

THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

"STORM" — ADVENTURE APPROVED FOR *TRAVELLER*

THE SHATTERED ALLIANCE

FICTION BY TIMOTHY ZAHN

MINIATURES FOR FANTASY ROLE PLAYING

ORIGINS BALLOT

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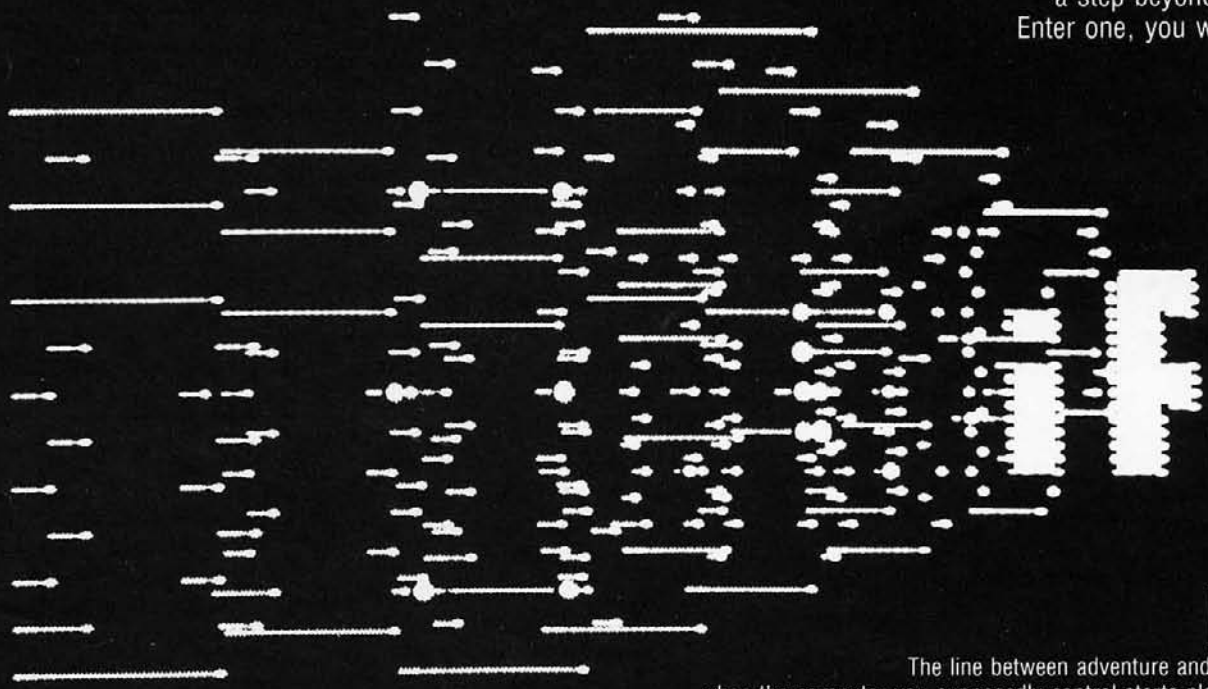

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In This Issue

This issue's cover story is about a great new superhero RPG . . . *Champions.* Denis Loubet's cover shows a scene from our local campaign, featuring the nefarious Overlord.

For *Traveller* fans, we have the second in Marischal Adventures' series of pull-out scenarios: "Storm." Aground on an alien planet, you must answer the simple question: "Where did everybody go?" Also . . . Bill Barton reviews the second edition of *High Guard.*

Fantasy gamers ought to appreciate the return of Conakar and his sword (or should that be "Whehalken and his fighter?"). Timothy Zahn's tale centers around a remarkable new sort of magic sword – which is described fully for game purposes.

Rounding out the issue, we have the Origins ballot; "The Balrog and the Finger of Death"; a comparison of fantasy miniatures lines; a full page of Murphy's Rules; and a "Where We're Going" column with about four months' worth of news.

–Steve Jackson

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THE SPACE GAMER (ISSN 0194-9977, USPS 434-250) is published monthly by The Space Gamer, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760-8957. Second class postage paid at Austin, TX. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Space Gamer, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760-8957.

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Printed in U.S.A. by Futura Press, Austin.

Subscription rates, as of 4-7-81:

In the United States – one year (12 issues) $21.00; two years (24 issues) $39.00. A lifetime subscription is $250. Outside the U.S. – please add $5 per year for surface mail. Airmail rates vary by country – please write for your current airmail rate. International rates subject to change as postal rates change. NOTE: All payments MUST be in U.S. dollars, made by International Money Order, or checks drawn on a U.S. or Canadian bank.

WHERE WE'RE GOING

There's so much going on this month that I could easily fill twice the usual space. I'm not even sure what the biggest news is . . . but probably it's the fact that we've just acquired a new magazine.

Fire & Movement

Many of you are already familiar with *Fire & Movement*, which has – up to now – been owned by Baron Publishing. F&M is strictly a historical wargaming magazine, and it's a very good one; for the past three years it's won the Charles Roberts Award for "best magazine covering boardgaming." I've always enjoyed F&M; I was extremely excited when I heard it was for sale, and I'm very pleased to have closed the deal. Baron wanted to sell the magazine, not because it wasn't successful, but because they didn't have the personnel to continue all their present projects. As a result, F&M was usually behind schedule. We'll fix that.

One thing that needs no "fixing" is the excellent *Fire & Movement* editorial staff, under the direction of Dr. Friedrich M. Helfferich. Dr. Helfferich will continue as editor, while Nick Schuessler (publisher of the *Journal of WWII Wargaming*) will join our Austin staff as F&M's managing editor.

If you're strictly interested in fantasy and science fiction gaming, there'll be nothing for you here. But if you are also interested in historical games, *Fire & Movement* has been – and will continue to be – "must" reading. You are now, I hope, wondering how to subscribe . . .

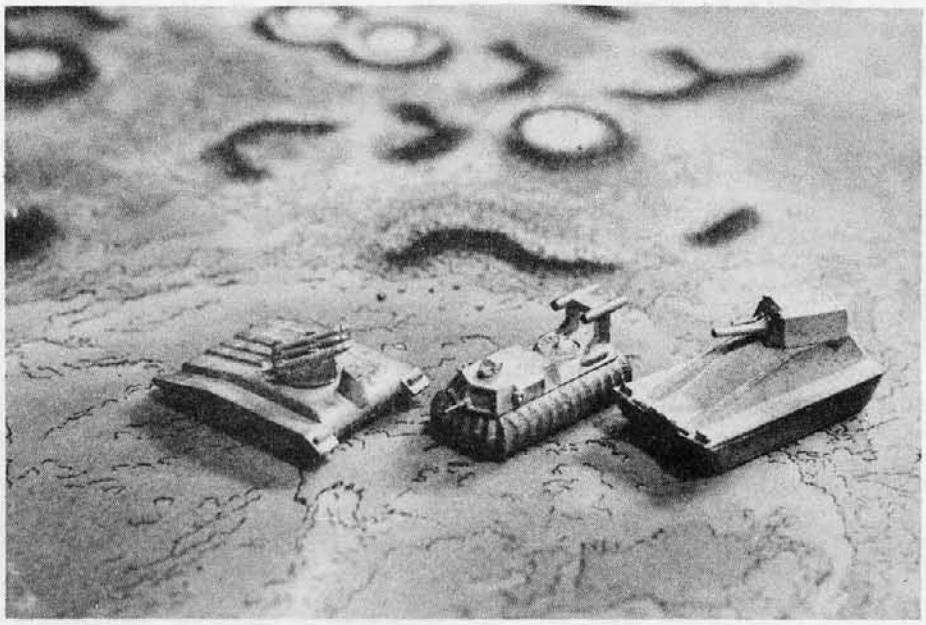
Next Issue

Our March issue will feature a special section of equipment for TRAVELLER;

"The Flinger and the Blob," two new character styles for TFT;

A featured review of the PBM game STARLORD;

And designer's notes for BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE.



Rates will be the same as for TSG: $21 for 12 issues, $39 for 24 issues. Initially, F&M will be bimonthly; we will probably try to go monthly fairly soon, so that news and reviews will be timelier. Physically, F&M will continue about the same (that is, very much like TSG). However, F&M usually has more ads than TSG, so it will probably be able to afford a few more pages per issue.

Boxed Games !! ???

In a word, yes. I've been working on this project for several months, without saying anything in this space. In the first place, I didn't want to give any good ideas away . . . and in the second place, if the whole thing fell through, I didn't want to hear questions about it for the next five years. But right now, it looks very good indeed.

Up until now, there have been three ways to package mini-games: plastic bags (like ours and Task Force's); cardboard boxes (like Metagaming's and Heritage's); and transparent plastic casings (like TSR's). None are ideal. Plastic bags are cheap – but they LOOK cheap, too, and eventually tear. Flimsy cardboard boxes are far worse, in my opinion. They look good on the shelves – but collapse quickly under normal wear, leaking counters everywhere. The TSR packaging is far better, but it can still be torn or crushed.

So . . . I started looking for a box that would (a) look good on the shelves, (b) hold up to continued use, and (c) still fit into your pocket. I think we've got one. The only prototype I have to date has five separate problems – but it looks as though they can all be overcome.

This means that the "new look" for all our minigames will be a black plastic box, 4¼" x 7¼" x 5/8" thick. There will be color labels front and back; inside – well protected – will be the game itself. We will ALSO include a ziplock bag to hold the counters.

The slimness and durability of these boxes will mean that you can actually put them in your pockets and take them with you – which suggested the name we're using: Pocket Box. I have some rather silly ideas for an ad campaign; suggestions gratefully appreciated.

The boxes will drive our standard price up to $5.00. (Actually, some of that is inflation; we're getting it all in one price increase.) But I think it's worth it – which is why I did it. For once, a game company can actually increase the value of a game (NOT just its price) by putting it into a box. We haven't had enough samples yet to test them to destruction; I don't know just how much punishment the Pocket Box will take. But I do know this – it will be orders of magnitude stronger than any cardboard box, and it'll look better, too. My prediction for the new year: By December, the other minigame makers will have dropped their cardboard packaging and gone into something similar. These are so good, they have to be copied!

We expect Box Day – the arrival of our box and label shipments – around Jan. 30. As of now, you can order our games for either $3 or $5. $3 will get you a game in a plastic bag UNTIL Box Day (whenever that comes). $3 orders received after that will be returned. $5 will get you a Pocket Box game, as soon as they're ready. (Note: *Ogre* and *G.E.V.* will be available only in Pocket Box editions.)

Looking at the Blinking Lights

We have also acquired our first computer: An Apple II+ with 48K and two disk drives. It's already at work – it speeded the compilation of our last mini-feedback by about 300%. Initially, the Apple will be used for computer game reviews and our own general ledger and accounts receivable. But we DO plan to get into game software eventually, and the Apple is a necessary first step.

(By the way: If you are a programmer capable of doing high-quality work on a free-lance [or other] basis, and you'd like to do games, get in touch. Examples of "high-quality," to me, would be *Wizardry* and *Ultima.* If you can write a program of that complexity and graphic sophistication, we can do business. I've got the game designs; I need some people that speak fluent Computer.)

Project Status

Ogre and *G.E.V.* are still slated for February appearance; the only limiting factor is the box and label situation. Denis' handpainted map masters are going to be state-of-the-art. The photo shows a map (before hexes). That is NOT sculptured terrain – just a flat painting.

The Ogre Book is coming along fine. It will feature some new art by Winch Chung, the original *Ogre* artist, who just showed up again a couple of weeks ago. We had these holes at the beginnings of a couple of articles – so his reappearance was most timely! Glad to have you back, Winch.

The new Cardboard Heroes are, AT LAST, at the printers.

The lead Ogre miniatures are going into production very soon for Jan. 30 availability. Right now we have the G.E.V., Heavy Tank, and Missile Tank. We have a good master for the static howitzer, and a pretty good one for the MHWZ. The Mark V Ogre master is still in Fort Worth being re-done, but it ought to be finished within a couple of weeks.

Lead *Car Wars* miniatures are also underway – but I don't know just when they'll be ready.

Origins Ballot

Also in this issue is the Origins ballot for 1981. As a matter of fact, it's in twice – once on p. 22 and once on the inside back mailer. (That way, subscribers don't have to worry about finding a copier.)

A lot of good games appeared during 1981. At the risk of immodesty (and because I'd like to hang a Charlie or two on the wall) I will point out that CAR WARS is eligible for Best S-F Boardgame, and KILLER is eligible for Best RPG Rules. I expect that TSG may get its usual nomination for Best Professional Role-Playing Magazine, but the competition (i.e., the JTAS) is very strong. And UNDEAD might get a crack at the fantasy game category, but there were a LOT of good ones out this year. Anyway – please take the time to fill in the ballot, for whatever your favorites are. The more participation, the more the awards mean.

Thus ends a very long column. Tune in next month and find out what's happening with the boxes!

–Steve Jackson

GAME MASTER

GAME MASTER exists to answer questions on your favorite games. If you have a rules question or play problem, send it in. Questions to be answered will be chosen on the basis of general interest. They will be first referred to the game publisher or designer. If no response is received, GAME MASTER will offer its own interpretation of the rule. Sorry – no individual replies are possible.

Killer

GDW's Loren Wiseman points out that "one of the suggested contents of the powder bomb (TSG 46) is glitter . . . a faceful of powder can be irritating, but glitter can be dangerous . . . [it] is usually ground glass. Confetti sounds so much safer." Good point; thank you, Loren. Strike the glitter, people.

–SJ

Space Opera

Stefan Jones, author of the *Outworlds* sector atlas for *Space Opera,* writes with the following errata:

"For the Greywolf Cutter (*Outworlds* p. 37) the power-plant type should read AMC, not Fusion. Astute readers will notice 40 tons of "missing mass." The unlisted systems aren't on the standard ship spec-sheet. 5 tons are allocated for workshop and parts storage. The workshop is located just port of the power plant. 2 tons are allocated as magazine space to each hardpoint turret, allowing 80 additional rounds per turret. 3.5 tons of magazine are allocated to each main-battery turret. The remaining 20 tons are EW/ECM hardware, distributed in modules outside the hull (the equipment doesn't appear on the deck plans). Scale is 1 cm = 2 meters. The cost of the vessel is 90.5 MCr; it is definitely not a standard design! Apologies to those inconvenienced by the omissions."

The Fantasy Trip

1. What happens in HTH when you hit a figure with enough hits to knock it down? Can it attack that turn if it has not already attacked or must it wait till next turn to attack?

2. If a figure is entangled in a net and, on the turn it tries to get up, takes enough damage to knock it down again, can it try to get up or does it have to wait until the next turn?

3. Is a regular net able to entangle a figure of 2 hexes or more in size? Do nets come in larger sizes? If so, what are the ST requirements and damage done?

4. Can a figure entangled in a net or caught by a bola, lasso, etc., fight in HTH combat?

5. Can a figure just hold a two-handed weapon with one hand, throw something with the other hand, and have that two-handed weapon ready to use next turn?

6. In *Death Test 2,* since the fire elemental cannot be harmed by ordinary weapons, can it be harmed by HTH?

–Michael Daly

(No replies received from Metagaming.)

1. "Reactions to Injury," p. 18, Advanced Melee, states that the figure may do nothing either that turn or the next.

2. As above; if the figure may not get up, it obviously cannot get up while entangled!

3. A regular net could probably not entangle a 2-hex creature; it is unlikely that a 2-hex net could be thrown by a normal person. Nets for giants and abnormally strong characters are, of course, physically possible; their details are up to the GM.

4. Probably not.

5. No; a two-handed weapon held in one hand is not ready.

6. Logically, if weapons cannot harm it, hands can't either.

–SJ

Car Wars

1. Can passengers be active participants in combat; i.e., eleven men riding in the bed of a truck firing with sub-machine guns at a single target?

2. Can passengers riding in the bed of a truck be hidden from other drivers by means of a canopy or tarp?

3. If so, would all eleven be able to get out of the truck to avoid a collision?

4. What are the chances of pedestrians exploding mines?

5. Are players allowed to neglect listing components or passengers with hand weapons on their record sheets?

6. Are armed passengers still considered passengers or do they become gunners?

–Myles Kitagawa

1. The rules specifically allow passengers to use hand weapons.

2. They could hide, but they could not fire while hiding . . . and if I were the referee, I would make them spend at least a turn after revealing themselves before firing (time to get rid of the tarp, spot their targets, etc.). I would also assume that fire directed into the truck bed might get several of them.

3. Sure – let each one try to roll individually.

4. An antivehicular mine will not go off if stepped on by a pedestrian. Antipersonnel mines are possible but would not usually be dropped by a vehicle – a mine that goes off when hit by a mere 150 pounds might explode when dropped.

5. Depends on how tough the referee is. Technically, they must list everything before the game starts.

6. A passenger armed with a hand weapon is a passenger. If he takes control of a vehicle weapon he becomes a gunner.

–SJ

Symmkyn's Edge

by Timothy Zahn

The heavy beams holding up the thatched roof were awash in smoke from the guttering candles on the rough-hewn tables; most of the inn's customers had either left or were snoring in drunken stupors. All in all, the inn seemed a lot less cheerful than it had a few hours ago. But then, a few hours ago I'd been a lot richer, too.

"You and your brilliant ideas," I muttered, glaring across the room at the well-dressed man walking out the door with *my* jewels at his waist.

"*My* brilliant ideas?" the sword at my side replied, his tone injured. "Who bet that twenty-weight ruby on a lousy half-tier, Conakar, you or me?"

"Okay, but joining the game in the first place was *your* idea. And since you mention it, that lousy half-tier looked a lot better somehow when I was betting. You weren't by any chance creating a small illusion, were you?"

Whehalken remained silent, and I knew I'd hit the roc squarely on the crest. Djinn swords can't lie; if he spoke now he'd be forced to confirm my suspicions.

I sighed, but I wasn't really angry. Ever since I'd bought Whehalken from a wandering wizard two years ago I'd been winning great treasures, and as quickly losing them. The reason, I suspected, was simple: Whehalken didn't want me getting too rich. Rich men, even rich swordsmen, tend to get sedentary – and a sedentary master would foul up Whehalken's own plans, bring his quest to free all magically-trapped spirits to a grinding halt. I don't mind him having his own mission, I suppose, and I'm not even unwilling to cooperate. But I guess he's still afraid to trust me on that.

The lucky winner – Parleet son of Hond, he'd named himself – was gone now. A foreigner from somewhere east, I'd guessed, carrying a pair of unusual prayer sticks on his belt along with the usual swordsman's gear. But even so, he knew his way around a card game.

"We staying here for what's left of the night?" Whehalken broke into my thoughts.

I got to my feet. "Nope. The innkeeper smirks too much. We'll go on to Isal; it's not very far."

"You think it'll be safe enough? That

guy Ezth who was sitting on your left was a brigand if I've ever met one."

"Good – he'll have passed the word that I'm already broke. Besides, won't my faithful djinn sword protect me?" Whehalken was smart enough to shut up.

The night air was crisp and clean after the smoke of the inn, and I took several deep breaths as I started off down the moonlit road. Actually, even without Whehalken I would have felt relatively safe. The fourth man in the game had been the Kagan Minaelas' third son, Tormas, and I gathered the inn was a neutral area where men of diverse loyalties could safely meet. Tormas' idea, most likely; the young aristocrat was an enthusiastic if not especially successful gamesman.

I was no more than a mile from the inn, and into an edge of the nearby forest, when my cozy illusion was shattered. From beyond a hill just ahead came the unmistakable sound of steel on steel. Drawing Whehalken, I started to run.

"Very uneven fight," Whehalken murmured, extending his senses to their limit. "Seven or eight to one. The defender . . . lots of jewels . . . it's Parleet."

Two thoughts flashed through my mind: one, that it served Parleet right; and two, those were *my* hard-earned jewels someone was trying to take. The second thought was stronger, and I kept running.

I topped the hill to a scene from swordsman nightmares. Half a furlong away stood a ring of five husky fighters, swords at the ready. In the middle, completely cut off from escape, Parleet was fighting for his life against three more. Fighting remarkably well, too – but he'd never make it without help. I considered shouting, decided to save my breath, and started on down.

I'd gone five steps when Parleet's blade took a particularly hard blow and shattered.

"Whehalken!" I snapped; but even as I said it I knew he couldn't do anything. Djinn swords can create whirlwinds and illusions, but only when stationary. Running full tilt down a hill, I wouldn't be able to stop in time for him to be able to help. Parleet was going to die.

Obviously, Parleet knew it, too. Dodging backwards, he snatched his prayer sticks from his belt. Even as one of his assailants stepped forward, sword swinging overhead toward him, Parleet struck the two sticks together in an x-shape –

And suddenly a gleaming sword was in his hands.

I almost tripped over my own feet with surprise. *Illusion!* was my first thought. But there was nothing illusory about the crash of metal as the swordsman's blade disintegrated against Parleet's; nor about the way the shimmering blade slashed horizontally, dropping the other to the ground in two pieces. The rest drew back with the shock of it . . . and someone spotted me.

Apparently they were shaken enough that even a lone reinforcement was too much for them. They dithered for a second and then broke, melting into the woods.

Parleet was still standing in the middle of the road when I reached him, his sword held in a sort of half-ready position. A reasonable precaution, I suppose, given the circumstances. Deliberately, I sheathed Whehalken. "Well met, Parleet," I said, panting a little. "Are you hurt?"

The sword tip dropped just a bit. I noticed that no blood had adhered to the blade. "No," he told me. "Your appearance was most helpful. I am grateful."

I shrugged. "Nothing to be grateful for – I was a few minutes too late to offer any real help. You heading to Isal?"

He nodded slowly, measuringly. "So am I," I continued. "If you'd like, we could travel together."

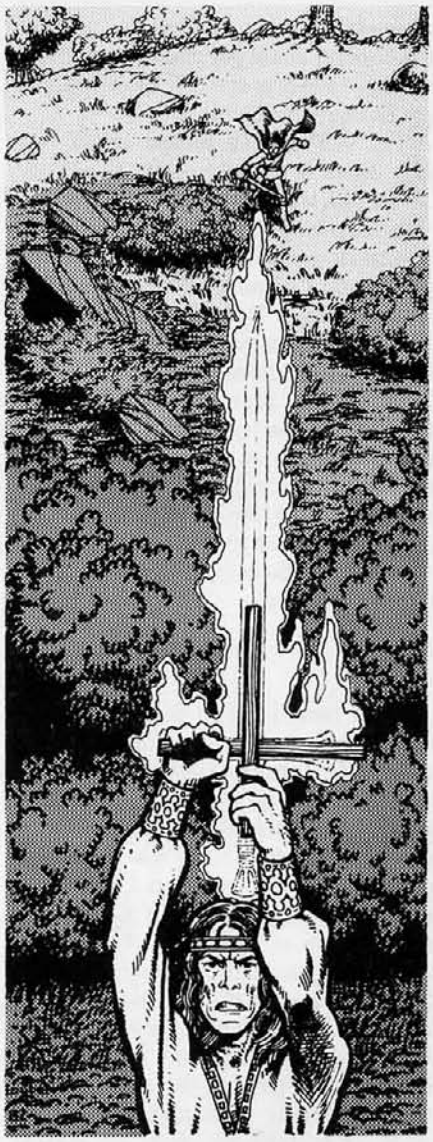
"There is no need," he said cautiously. "The bandits will not return."

"That may depend on whether they know what you've got there." I nodded toward his weapon as casually as I could, feeling a tightness in my throat. If he'd had any thought about killing me, my next words would give him all the reason he'd need to do so. "That's a Symmkyn's Edge, isn't it?"

The muscles of his face tightened and the sword tip rose an inch before slowly sinking back. "Yes," he admitted at last. "I did not know they were known so far west."

"Really? I thought *everyone* had at least heard rumors about them." That was probably an exaggeration, but not much of one. Symmkyn's Edges were just too good a story for most bards to pass up.

There were supposed to be twelve of them in existence, the Master Wizard Symmkyn having died – rather horribly – while creating the thirteenth. Owned currently by the royal house of Khidiw, they were light, unbreakable, and sharp enough to cut almost anything with ease . . . *but* they could only be used once a day, remaining in sword form for a period lasting from fifteen minutes to an hour, depending on the moon's phase. The rest of the time each Edge existed simply as two ordinary-looking sticks about a hand in length. Whether Symmkyn had intended them to have such limitations, or whether his magic simply hadn't been capable of anything stronger, I didn't know. As it was, an Edge was of only marginal use, little more than a weapon of last resort. But I'd just had a demonstration of how



effective that last resort could be.

All this flashed through my mind along with an appreciation of Parleet's dilemma. Before he could get to Isal his only sword would fall apart, useless until next sundown. My presence with him might ward off further attacks . . . but he had no guarantee I wouldn't then kill him myself. Unfortunately for me, his safest choice would be to kill me right now and take Whehalken. Somehow, I had to convince him to take a chance on me.

Then my own sword took a hand. "Conakar, your lack of manners disgusts me sometimes," Whehalken piped up. "Aren't you ever going to introduce us?"

"Uh – sorry. Parleet, son of Hond, this is Whehalken, my djinn sword. Whose breeding is superior to mine, of course."

The sarcasm was wasted on both of them. Parleet was staring at the black hilt with frank astonishment, and Whehalken was waxing his usual eloquent about what an honor it was to meet someone so clearly high in the courts of

his people. Parleet, thankfully, cut him off before he could get really going. "Are you really a living spirit?" he asked, his voice not quite believing it.

"Yes – I've been locked inside this blade, which is actually pretty thin. Conakar, let him see how light I am."

Whehalken's judgment isn't perfect, but his instincts are usually pretty good. With my left hand I withdrew him, offering the hilt to Parleet. "Here – but let's hurry this up. I want to get to Isal before those friends of yours come back."

For maybe four heartbeats Parleet looked me in the eye, fingering Whehalken's hilt. Then he nodded, handed the djinn sword back to me, and reached down to retrieve the pack he'd dropped earlier. "Yes, let us go."

I sheathed Whehalken, and we headed off down the road.

* * *

Parleet turned out to be a much more interesting road companion that I'd expected. He'd been pretty tight-lipped during the card game, and it was only now that I discovered how well-educated and well-traveled he really was – less of a surprise, of course, now that I also knew he was of the royal house of Khidiw. We traded stories as we walked, tales of impossible scrapes we'd managed to get out of. In the middle of my first story the Edge came quietly apart into its two sticks, which Parleet just quietly slipped back into his belt. I ignored the event, though I began keeping a sharper eye on the woods from then on. But we reached Isal without further incident.

Isal was a good-sized town, the major trading center of the Kagan Minaelas' demesne. I'd planned to buy a horse here, but I no longer had enough money to do so, and I had no intention of crossing the Haari Wilderness on foot. But solving that problem would have to wait; all I wanted now was some sleep. Parleet insisted on hiring private rooms for both of us at the first inn we came to. I was too tired to argue, and besides I figured I'd earned it by playing bodyguard for him. Barring my door, I took off my cloak, boots, and Whehalken and fell across the bed. The bed was sturdy, and it survived.

It had been an hour or so before dawn when we arrived in Isal; by the time I woke it was mid-afternoon. I washed up in the basin provided, then went downstairs and devoured a huge meal. Parleet, I learned from the innkeeper, had left some time earlier after securing the location of the village swordsmith. In an effort to conserve my few remaining coins I offered to chop wood to pay for a couple days' more lodging and meals. The woodpile out back was well hidden from view, which enabled me to use Whehalken instead of the innkeeper's much duller axe. Whehalken objected to being used for something so mundane, but shut up when I reminded him about the card game, and did the rest of his sulking in silence.

Even so, the job took several hours, and it was nearly sundown when I took the axe back inside and went to find Parleet.

He wasn't in his room; and a quick check showed that none of the staff had seen him since noon.

"I don't like it," Whehalken whispered to me as I stood outside the inn, looking both directions down the busy street. "I think something's happened to him."

"He's probably just looking around," I suggested . . . but I was getting a bad feeling about it myself. Parleet was carrying a small fortune in jewels, with – at best – a brand-new and untried sword to defend himself with. If he hadn't made it as far as the swordsmith's, he wouldn't have had even that much. "Still . . . what do you say we take a walk before dinner?"

"Now you're talking. Let's go."

I got directions to the swordsmith's and set off. I walked slowly, looking down crossroads and alleys for Parleet's distinctive clothing, while Whehalken reached out in his own way. We'd covered almost half the town, and the stars were bright overhead, when we finally found him.

He was at the end of a cul-de-sac behind a pile of garbage, invisible from the main street. His hands and feet were tightly trussed, the swelling in his fingers indicating he'd been that way for quite a while. Above the gag his eyes were dull and only semiconscious; the hair behind his right ear was matted with dried blood. Still fastened to his side were a new-looking sword and the neatly-sliced cords of a jewel pouch.

I got his gag off, and attacked the ropes with my dagger, and it was only then that I noticed what I should have seen right away.

The two sticks of the Symmkyn's Edge were gone.

* * *

Parleet took the better part of the next day recovering – an amazing display of will power, given how eager he was to wreak some vengeance.

"I *will* get it back, Conakar," he told me late in the afternoon, after a practice session with his new sword. If his assailants had made one mistake, I decided, it was in leaving him in good enough shape to fight.

"That's going to be a good trick," I told him, "considering you don't even know who's got it."

"There are but two choices. The thieves must belong with those who attacked me on the road two days ago. No one else would know about my Edge, or risk a daylight attack to obtain it."

"I suppose so. And next you'll tell me *that* attack had to come from one of the others in our card game, right?"

He nodded. "Yes. Ezth the brigand chieftain, or the Kagan-son Tormas."

"Fine. So which one was it?"

"I do not know. I may need to confront both of them."

I shook my head. "That's crazy. You walk into either a brigand camp *or* a Kagan's court with an accusation like that and you probably won't come out alive – even if the person in question is completely innocent. Why don't you wait a few days, try to find some witnesses who can give you a clue?"

Parleet stared off to the east for a moment, then shook his head. "No. The

moon is waxing now. Every day I delay will give the thief that much more use of the Edge when I face him. But I thank you for your concern."

I sighed. But there was nothing more I could do.

"I can tell you who's got it," Whehalken said.

We both looked down at him. "Who?" Parleet asked.

"First, a condition. You have to allow Conakar and me to go with you to get it back."

I blinked, but Parleet shook his head before I could speak. "I thank you, but I cannot allow you to risk yourselves for me."

"That's silly – and it's also suicide. I'm probably the only sword around that can take the Edge without breaking, you know. Or were you planning to try and dodge around the thief until the Edge comes apart?"

Parleet pursed his lips, then nodded reluctantly. "Very well; you may come. Now tell me who took it."

"And how did you find out?" I added.

"Simple logic," the djinn sword said. "Ask yourself this: why didn't they kill Parleet when they had the chance?"

"All right, why?"

"Because the murder of a foreign nobleman would cause such a stink that the Kagan Minaelas would *have* to root out the culprit. But as things stand now, Parleet can't even ask the Kagan for help without revealing that it was a Symmkyn's Edge that was stolen, which I'm sure he'd rather not do."

"But leaving him alive means they've got to worry about him trying to get it back himself," I argued. "I agree it would be stupid to kill him in Isal, but why couldn't they just get him quietly out of town and *then* kill him?"

"Aha!" Whehalken said, his tone that of a teacher to a dull student who has somehow managed to get the correct answer anyway. "My point. A Kagan-son *could* have done it that way on such short notice, simply by sending him an invitation to visit the manor house. But a brigand couldn't."

Parleet straightened, his eyes glowing with new fire. "Do you know the location of Ezth's camp?" he asked Whehalken.

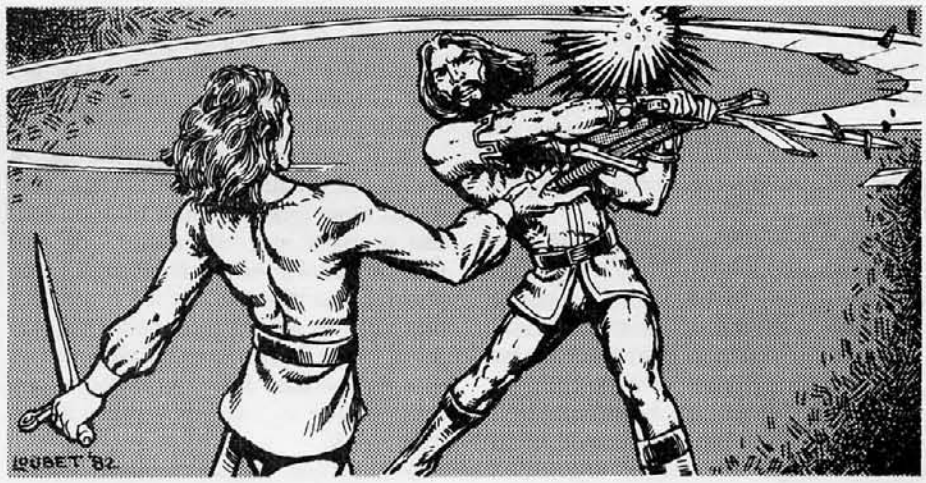
"No, but I can find it. I can pick up the trail from the forest road."

"Tonight?" I asked with a sinking feeling.

"Tonight," Parleet nodded firmly.

* * *

The final sentry was trying to stifle a yawn when Whehalken whispered in to stifle it forever, stabbing through his heart



and half an inch into the tree behind him. Getting a grip on the dead man, I withdrew the blade and lowered him silently to the leaf-covered ground. Beyond him, just visible through the trees, was the light of muted campfires.

"Good-sized clearing ahead," Whehalken murmered. "Four or five men sitting around one of the fires. Tents around the edge – lots of men sleeping there."

"Second sentry shift, maybe," I whispered to Parleet. "Our timing could've been better."

"We can handle them," Parleet whispered back calmly. I wasn't that confident, but we'd come too far to back out now. Keeping one ear cocked for instructions from Whehalken, I started cautiously toward the campfires.

We didn't make it.

I don't know what kind of creature Parleet almost stepped on, but it made an incredible amount of noise getting out of the way – and the five guards caught us flatfooted at the edge of the clearing. With a howl, they charged.

Parleet and I charged, too, and we all met with a clash of swords that temporarily drowned out the noise from the wakening camp. The guards didn't have a chance; seconds later we were running again toward the center of the clearing.

"Where is Ezth?" Parleet called to Whehalken.

I drowned out the sword's answer. "Later! For now, get to the center!"

Parleet didn't argue. By the time I skidded to a halt there were easily a hundred men converging on our position, swords gleaming evilly . . . and they were exactly where I wanted them.

I waited until the closest was thirty feet away, and then raised Whehalken to a point over my head. "Whehalken: whirlwind!"

In a desert with lots of loose sand available, a djinn whirlwind can be devastating; here in the forest, it was still pretty effective. Standing back to back, Parleet and I were in the eye of a storm that literally blew the campfires out and tumbled the brigands helplessly around, pelting them with twigs and acorns moving fast enough to draw blood. Across the clearing, I could see by the light of the moon that all the tents were still standing, apparently just outside the wind's effective range. But that was all right – there shouldn't be anyone still in them.

And then, directly ahead, one of the tent flaps opened and a familiar figure emerged.

I didn't hesitate, but charged toward him at full speed, the whirlwind vanishing the second I moved. Ezth's men would be no trouble for a while, and I wanted to get the Edge back before that changed.

Ezth had guts, I'll give him that. He saw me running toward him, saw what had happened to his army, and he still held his ground instead of trying to escape. Drawing a jeweled sword that he'd probably stolen from a nobleman, he waited – and as I trotted into range, he twitched the sword abruptly and swung.

It was a crude blow, but one with a lot of brute force behind it. He'd probably broken a lot of his enemies' blades with it in the past . . . but none of those had been djinn swords. I gripped Whehalken's hilt with both hands and grunted with satisfaction as Ezth's sword shattered against him.

The brigand's eyes widened momentarily, but he didn't waste time in wonderment. Quick as a cat, his hands reached to opposite forearms and came out of the loose sleeves with two sticks –

And the Symmkyn's Edge was arcing toward my neck.

I ducked, feeling it whistle over my head, and had Whehalken ready by the time Ezth brought it around again. As I braced for the blow, it suddenly occurred to me that if the Edge's magic came from a trapped spirit, Whehalken would be releasing it as soon as the blades made contact, ruining the Edge completely in the

process. I wondered how I would explain that to Parleet . . . and then it was too late to worry about it. Our blades met –

The shock threw me two feet to the side. Before I could regain my balance Ezth was on me again, sword completely unaffected.

I don't know how long we fought, but it seemed like forever. Ezth was a madman, wielding the Edge with a strength I've rarely seen even in master warriors. I was on the defensive right from the beginning, conserving my own strength and wishing I knew exactly how much time remained before the Edge would come apart. Perhaps even more urgently, I needed to know what had happened to Parleet and what Ezth's men were doing. But I didn't dare look away. Around and around we went – and then I stepped into a hole and fell heavily onto my right elbow.

Ezth was ready; indeed, he must have purposely forced me into the proper area. With a howl of triumph he raised the Edge high – and barely got out of the way as a sword scythed toward his side.

It was Parleet.

Ezth instantly switched from me to the more immediate threat. His first return blow broke Parleet's blade in half. But it threw him off balance; and, too late, he saw Parleet's second sword. The strategy was obvious, but risky: sacrifice one blade to get the second into position for a killing blow. But that blow *had* to succeed, because there wouldn't be another chance . . . and as I watched, Parleet missed.

For the first time, Ezth actually smiled. Small wonder: Parleet would be dead in two blows, and with my sword arm still numb I'd be less effort than that. Raising the Edge, he stepped forward –

And the Edge became two sticks.

The brigand didn't waste any time. Before Parleet could react, he dropped the useless Edge and darted back into the clearing. But he didn't run far; by the time Parleet caught up with him he'd found a sword and was waiting.

I got to my knees, shaking life into my arm, and looked around for the rest of Ezth's men. But none of them seemed to be on their feet yet . . . and suddenly I realized what Parleet had been doing while fought Ezth. "He killed *all* of them?" I muttered out loud.

"Just the ones that got up," Whehalken answered. "About twenty of them. The rest are still unconscious."

"Oh." Reaching down I picked Whehalken up – and as I did so a sudden gleam in the grass caught my eye. A shimmering sword blade . . .

The Symmkyn's Edge.

I had to pick it up before I believed my senses. But it *had* come apart – I'd seen it –

Seen it.

I looked down at Whehalken. "Cute. Real cute."

"Thank you," he said, a bit smugly. "I always prefer these smaller illusions, myself. They're usually the most believable."

A death scream split the air, and I looked up in time to see Ezth sink to the ground, Parleet's sword buried in his chest.

* * *

"You're very quiet today," I commented to Whehalken as I rode out of Isal on the horse Parleet had insisted on buying me.

"Just thinking about the Edge," he said.

"Yeah. Look, I'm sorry there weren't any trapped spirits there for you to free – and I know that's why you invited us along with Parleet, so don't deny it. But look at the bright side: If the Edges aren't trapped spirits, it means you won't have to waste time hunting for the other eleven."

"Sure." He paused. "You know, Conakar, it's kind of depressing. Symmkyn was probably the greatest wizard that ever lived – and this is the best he could do? That Edge wasn't really any stronger than I am, when it was useful at all. No wonder most wizards would rather trap spirits to do all their magic. I'm fighting a losing battle."

There was a sadness in his voice I'd never heard before. And he was right; if the Edge was the best non-spirit magic possible, then wizards would keep on trapping new spirits as fast as Whehalken could free the old ones. "Wel-l-l . . . think of it as a quest you won't outgrow. A sort of lifetime job."

He snorted. "Conakar, do you have any *idea* how long a djinn's lifetime *is*?"

The rest of the journey was very quiet.

Just The Edge You Needed!

The Symmkyn's Edge, or simply "Edge," is a powerful, though limited sword. As far as is known, only the twelve created by Symmkyn himself exist.

Most of the time, the Edge takes the form of a pair of elaborately carved sticks, about a foot long by a half-inch in diameter. (No two sticks look exactly alike, and the sticks are not interchangeable.) Once a day, these innocuous sticks may become a deadly blade.

To use an Edge, one must take one stick in each hand and clap them together in an X shape. They will instantly melt together; the user will then be holding a shimmering sword, capable of cutting through most objects – including other weapons. No Edge has ever been destroyed. It may be assumed that an Edge in sword form is nearly indestructible; an Edge in stick form could probably be broken easily.

The sword thus formed will vary in size according to the strength of the user; it will be the largest "bastard" sword that he can conveniently use. Thus, it may be used two-handed or with a shield. Each time an Edge hits, it does exactly twice the damage that a "normal" sword of its size would do in the hands of the current user. The Edge does not improve its user's ability – it merely does more damage.

Unfortunately, the Edge will only stay in sword form for a limited time each day. Its power is based upon the moon. At full moon, an Edge will remain useful for a full hour before separating into its two sticks. At new moon, though, it will only be good for fifteen minutes. As the moon waxes and wanes, so does the sword's utility.

In a campaign system where the referee knows the phase of the moon (i.e., *RuneQuest*, *DragonQuest*) the actual computation is simple.

In other systems, it is often simplest to determine the blade's "lifetime" randomly. Roll 1d20 and multiply by 3 to get a number from 3 to 60. This is the time the blade will endure. Any result less than 15 should be discarded; roll again. Remember, though, that the Edge may only be activated once per day. Since it is moon-oriented, a "day" lasts from one moonrise – call it dusk, or about 6 PM – to the next.

An Edge cannot be blunted and will cut through most substances. A substance that cannot be cut (and there should be very few) will not affect the blade. However, even with an Edge, it will take nearly forever to carve tunnels or to do other things a sword was not meant for.

In combat, an Edge will shatter most blades. It is assumed that an Edge-user will know this and will deliberately seek to strike at the blade rather than the man. Therefore any weapon used against an Edge must make a saving roll, each combat turn, to avoid destruction. The saving roll is made on one six-sided die. (In a system where the opponent strikes before the Edge-user, and the Edge-user cannot parry – or tries to parry and misses – no saving roll will be needed *if and only if* the foe actually strikes the user of the Edge. Otherwise, it is assumed that the blades clashed.)

For an ordinary sword, the saving roll is 6 on 1d6 – that is, any roll but 6 will break the blade.

For a sword of fine workmanship, the saving roll is 4, 5, or 6.

For a magical blade, the roll is 2 through 6; any result but 1 will save it.

Blades containing bound spirits, and "artifact" quality magical blades (referee's decision) do not have to roll; their magic is equal to that of the Edge and they cannot be broken by it.

It should be noted that "sword" above could refer to any weapon used against the Edge, and that a weapon magically protected against shattering saves like any other magical weapon unless it is also of artifact quality. The Edge is stronger than any ordinary spell against blade breakage.

If the Edge is found in the possession of a person who knows what it is, he/she will use it (probably with great skill) as a last resort. Both the sword and the sticks radiate strong magic. Symmkyn signed some (but not all) of the sticks.

–Steve Jackson

LOOK!

Up in the sky . . .

by Aaron Allston

The villainous Overlord, resplendent in gold-and-green power armor, rocketed up the access hole and snarled a curse at the superheroes who had invaded his complex. Lightrune, tongue held firmly in cheek, swung a solar-powered fist and sent his enemy plummeting back down the tube. Lightrune's counterpart and ally, Dark-Knight, jumped down after the villain . . .

Meanwhile, the teleporter Phosphene reappeared fifteen stories above the street outside, Overlord's ally Megan in his grip. "Someone's got to take da fall, baby, and it ain't going to be me," he misquoted cheerfully, and dropped her . . .

Meanwhile, ShadowWalker rounded the last corner of the complex's hallway, drew his .45, and sighted on the elevator from which the inevitable guards would soon begin to pour . . .

I. Origin

The superhero campaign of *Champions* which I run, which is successful enough that it's been thrown out of TSG playtest sessions (it was crowding out all the other games), began as an irritation. Steve Jackson came back from Origins with the news that some new company in California had nabbed the name *Champions*; I'd hoped to use *Champion* on a personal game project. I could review the Hero Games offering if I wished. Wonderful.

Looking over the rulebook, though, I was impressed. The game appeared clear and coherent after a single read-through and seemed to faithfully simulate the four-color stuff of comic books. Extensive solo playtesting ensued immediately, with the heroic Lightbearers waging a running war with the criminal mastermind Overlord.

In the end, Overlord's munitions-running scheme was wrecked; the Lightbearers disbanded, with one member dead and two others unwillingly allied with the villain; and I had chosen to run *Champions* on a regular basis. I turned the Lightbearers into NPCs, made their story a minor chapter of this world's superheroics, and began to create an "actual" campaign.

II. The World

Step One of making a campaign entertaining is creating a world the players will actually like on a continued basis. With multiplicity of worlds a common theme in comic books, I simply created another alternate Earth, with lots of familiar faces from the comics worlds. These ground rules came into effect:

(1) Practically every superhuman who had ever appeared in Marvel, DC, Quality, Fawcett, and Street & Smith publications had appeared on this world.

(2) Most of them had aged at a normal rate since the time they first appeared.

(3) History would deviate at times from the history we know to reflect the presence of superheroes and supervillains.

(4) The history of superheroes would occasionally veer in wildly different directions from the original comic books.

So, we have a world where VE day occurred in 1943, thanks to superhero intervention; where Doc Savage was responsible for the success of the Manhattan Project in 1945 and for the destruction of Sen. Joseph McCarthy's career years later; where almost all of the members of the Justice Society are retired or deceased; where Galactus tried to destroy the world in '65 and was slain, taking with him too many of New York's costumed champions; where the original Human Torch is chairman of the Avengers; where the children of Patricia Savage operate the Savage Company from the 86th floor of the Empire State Building; where Gotham is a borough of New York; where the child of Superman and Mary Marvel patrols the skies of Chicago/Metropolis as a new Captain Marvel; and so on.

Characters can face the likes of Dr. Doom, and struggle on a more personal level against the Big Brotherisms of H.P. Gyrich and Operation: Wunderkind. Brilliantly-written, vicious, and mostly specious editorials spew forth from the office of the publisher of the *Daily Bugle*. S*T*A*R Labs and Stark International can be consulted on technological matters.

With a sense of familiarity established, the players were at ease in this world. But, with all the changes, they found it unsafe to rely on anything they saw in the comics.

III. The Characters

From the start, the potential for violence existed between player-characters. About half of the first batch of heroes were black-clad, weapon toting avengers of the night, while the others were relatively ordinary costumed folk. In true pulp tradition, the first group tended to kill villains, and the second group tended to rescue helpless civilians.

The first weeks of play saw more than one argument on the matter of bloodshed, with bitterness growing between characters. Not so between the players – they enjoyed the clashes hugely, as the antagonists drew sides and even-thinking bullet-proof heroes stood in the middle. Would Phosphene try to hit Shiva again? Would Shiva tear Phosphene's heart out? Did Ninja mind dangling in the grip of the pacifist Shadowfox's telekinesis? Stick around for next issue!

Within ten or so episodes, nearly twenty heroes had debuted within the hero-team

The regulars from the early Strike Force adventures included (left to right):

Swashbuckler,
Napalm,
Phosphene,
Lightrune,
ShadowWalker (rear),
Pinchus (foreground),
Samiél (rear),
Lorelei (foreground),
Ninja, and
Shiva.

Strike Force:

- ShadowWalker – dark-clad stalker of the night.
- Swashbuckler – romantic guardian of Gotham's streets.
- Lightrune – solar hero, with command over light.
- Phosphene – tough-talking teleporter.
- Shiva – martial artist, presumed a part-time assassin.
- Napalm – pyrokinetic master of fear and flame (later killed in action).
- Lorelei – born with her namesake's ability to enthrall.
- Samiél – shapeshifter, a 6'9" beauty from another world.
- Vladimir – professionally nondescript master spy.
- Ninja – death-dealing high priest of Bruce Lee.
- Ichi-ban – Japanese sorcerer and successor to a proud tradition.
- Bolo – power-armor clad hero.
- Man-O-War – frontline fighter, vicious in hand-to-hand combat.
- Pinchus – diminutive but mighty alien.
- Red Archer – sorcerous bowman from another plane.
- NightMist – half-undead and totally confused hero.
- Cygnus – street punk with one difference: powerful black-feathered wings.
- DarkKnight – disgruntled but immensely strong champion.
- Shadowfox – subtle spy and electronics genius.

IV. The Problems

The difficulties the GM encounters in a *Champions* campaign are not like those of other RPGs. Keeping players in character is no difficulty; most are delighted with their roles. Divergent goals don't crop up too often, as most characters are in the racket for the same reasons: to fight crime and to look spiffy.

Disorganization can be a problem among characters. The early adventures of Strike Force didn't read much like a normal hero-team comic book. Strike Force initially started out as an unnamed non-team with an unfixed cast of regulars, no team equipment, and no headquarters other than a Newark apartment rented by one character.

The GM can easily counter such a situation – by introducing an experienced "patron" hero, complete with HQ and equipment, or letting one of the characters start out as a multimillionaire – but he doesn't have to.

Watching the characters charge out of their temporary HQ, only to realize they didn't have enough mobility to get to Manhattan, was a kick. An even bigger kick was the sight of these heroes standing on a Newark streetcorner, arguing heatedly about whether to take the subway, a bus, or a cab. (Ultimately, one of the less civic-minded characters slipped away from the argument, stole a bus, and chauffered the bemused heroes to their goal. Then he left the keys accessible and the bus was stolen from *him*. It's a rough life.)

Over the next few weeks a fascinating shaking-down process occurred. The cast of characters evened out and became more regular. After one adventure, when a telepathic character nearly burned himself out trying to keep the others in communication, the heroes developed small, short-range radios. In their next adventure, they "liberated" a helicopter from the bad guys, and in the adventure after that they surreptitiously purchased a Long Island scrapyard for their headquarters.

Watching the heroes struggle to establish themselves and learn to compete with the "big boy" hero groups was entertaining. It would have been simpler to give them a wealthy sponsor, but this way the characters know that they've earned what they have.

The primary difficulty in the game, though, lies in creating adventures where all the heroes can participate. Early adventures in the Strike Force campaign tended to veer too far in one direction or another. When the heroes skulked in murky dens and alleys, ShadowWalker could slink confidently ahead, while Lightrune stumbled along, hoping he wouldn't accidently glow. Conversely, when all the action took place in a free-wheeling underwater battle, Lightrune was having a field day while ShadowWalker piloted the helicopter and chewed his knuckles.

Subsequent adventures have consisted

of multiple encounters, with all characters being able to participate in most. Extended stories with many types of actions and situations tend to allow all characters to exhibit their varied abilities. It's harder work for the GM than a generic bank holdup, but it's more interesting, too.

V. Components

Although the game only requires paper, dice, and a tactical hex-grid layout or ruler, most of the players involved tended to prefer miniatures to counters. The night of Strike Force's first adventure, standard Cardboard Heroes were used to represent the characters. Faced, during the next week, with the unavailability of superhero lead miniatures in Austin, I set out to modify the Cardboard Heroes into something more appropriate.

It turned out to be somewhat easier than expected. To transform a fantasy-oriented cardboard miniature into a superhero takes only four steps: (1) shaving, (2) outlining, (3) re-coloring, and (4) coating.

Take a Hero which, in stance, build, and clothing somewhat resembles the character you wish to represent. Using an X-Acto, carefully scrape away all parts of the figure which are not correct for the hero, leaving the figure's outlines intact. Scraping off the outer color, naturally enough, turns the scraped sections white, and also roughs up the cardboard so that it will better take new ink. With a very fine-point pen, ink in the costume motifs necessary for the character; then, with colored felt-tips or crayons, color in the costume. Given that crayons tend to smear and that players tend to spill cokes, you can laminate the hero with wide tape or any sort of laminating plastic.

So far, the Heroes which have adapted best to superheroes have been: (Set 1) Barbarian (sans axe), Barbarian Woman (sans sword), Martial Artist, and Assassin; (Set 2) Tavernkeeper (minus mug), Strangler, and Bushwhacker (sans crossbow). It's fairly easy to get rid of all that extraneous equipment; simply scrape the area white and re-ink the anatomy underneath.

Ultimately, Steve, who had played in the campaign (he was Ninja) and had been attracted to the idea of Cardboard (Super)Heroes, decided to publish some. These new Heroes appear under FGU's *Villains & Vigilantes* mark, and will carry Gamescience's *Superhero 2044* label by arrangement with Lou Zocchi, but are also appropriate for *Champions.* The techniques listed for altering them can also be used if a figure needs to resemble more closely the character it represents.

VI. Other Campaigns

Just within the group playing in the Strike Force campaign, four other players have decided to run campaigns set up on the same alternate world. The Dread-Knights, based in Dallas, have already had several adventures. Westguard, the hero-team of San Francisco, has premiered. By press time, groups in Chicago and Quebec will also have debuted. Although the rule-books took quite a while to get to Austin, once they did arrive they began to sell quickly. It appears that the game will spread like the plague, and deservedly so.

DarkKnight missed utterly as the Overlord twisted nimbly aside; the powerful hero ineptly fell two stories to crash on a concrete garage floor. Overlord rocketed up again through the access hatch and casually pounded Lightrune into a wall . . .

Outside, Megan impacted loudly on the asphalt street, stood up unhurt, and glared at Phosphene . . .

Meanwhile, ShadowWalker drew a careful bead on the first guard to emerge from the elevator, fired, and missed by a country mile . . .

Will Our Heroes conquer their own clumsiness in time to defeat Overlord's minions? Of course. But come back for next issue . . .

Think of Russians as elves and match wits.

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The Balrog and the Finger of Death

by W. G. Armintrout

Last week I hosted an evening of dungeon adventuring at my place. I had everything on hand that an up-to-date gamemaster needs – a pre-written adventure book, carefully painted miniatures, a plastic dungeon map on which to set up the combat situations, everything that the local group can afford to buy. When we started out I read the introduction straight from the book (perhaps I droned a little bit, but it was only the second time I'd looked at the adventure). If combat was called for, I'd whip out my plastic map, stick stone pillars and unopened chests and marauding monsters just where the "x"s were in the maps in the book, and say, "OK, here's the room and what do you guys want to do?" The most impressive part of the whole evening was when I plopped down the two-inch red-painted lead figure in the doorway, and said, "Look out, it's a balrog!"

That's what happened last week. Now I want to tell you about an adventure I took part in a long, long time ago – back when role-playing was brand-new and D&D wasn't sold by Sears and J.C. Penneys.

These were paper and pencil days. Miniatures were being made, but nobody I knew owned any because no store sold them locally and they weren't the sort of thing you bought "sight unseen" by mail order. Supplements and solo dungeons hadn't been invented. The rules we played were primitive, combat systems were a joke, and the dungeon master was both moderator and game designer when new rules needed to be invented on the spot. None of this kept us from playing. In fact, we were on a fantastic lucky streak – all of us had characters nearing godhood, with magical artifacts and awesome weapons and incredible spells . . . so the DM decided to create one last vast and horrible dungeon that would test our mettle and (the DM hoped) kill us all off.

The scene of our last romp was an ancient and deserted temple about which many strange rumors were afloat. The local villagers called upon their lords and princes to investigate – and, since the lords and princes were our player characters, we agreed to help out. At first the adventure was anti-climactic; we slew a few hundred monsters and penetrated to the innermost hall of the temple. Then things got exciting.

First came the enraged army of berserking orcs. The sheer numbers of the assault formed the problem – we came out alive, but many followers lay dead and the pack mule expired. Then came the two evil high priests and their wolfpack; a hard-fought contest but we survived. "Is that all you can throw at us?" we jeered out loud.

The lights went out, and two balrogs entered the room. Now I doubt I can do justice to the experience, but it is all engraven in my memory – the way the creatures looked, and walked, and fought us in the cloying darkness. Suffice it to say that we almost died, but didn't, and that the one blow that saved us all – like a home run in the bottom of the ninth – was an incredibly weak little Finger of Death that shouldn't have worked but did.

To this day, whenever my old comrades from that old adventure meet again, we slap each others' backs, and recall the time that (and we start to laugh and people stare) we killed the balrog with a *finger of death*!

So what's the point of these two stories? Simply this: last week we pushed around some lead figures on a plastic map and played a game inside a dungeon; but against those balrogs many years ago *I had an adventure!* One was just a game, the other was an experience.

The difference lies in the very nature of role-playing games. A wargame is a contest involving cardboard squares on a paper map; if you win, you jump up and down and say "Beat you, sucker!" A role-playing game is a different kettle of fish. It is very personal – "*I* am in a dungeon" – and all of the real fun takes place inside the players' minds and not on any gameboard. Afterwards, if you survive, you heave a sigh of relief and say, "Gosh, I didn't think we were going to make it!"

It's a matter of imagination. A role-playing game is good to the degree that the game, the gamemaster, and the players work together to make themselves create a "reality" within their heads.

Let's talk specific problems and solutions:

1. Miniatures. I've got to tell you, I love these little painted lead figures. But miniatures, along with all of the new accessories – dungeon tiles, treasure sets, ad infinitum – form a peril for the role-player. They are a potential hindrance to the imagination. Too often a gamemaster will whip out his plastic map, spread out the figures and walls and chests on the map, and say, "Here she is, boys, go to work! Look at that horrible red two-inch figure – it's a balrog!"

The problem is that players play the game at the level it is presented to them. The imagination is lazy – if you tell it that some tiny figure is a balrog it will dutifully believe you. That robs the players of the opportunity to really experience a balrog – by having to create and imagine it in their heads.

To have a great experience, you've got to force yourself to visualize the situation. That will create an intensity you can't get by looking at a map and pretty counters. The question each gamemaster must ask himself is: Should I get rid of all the miniatures, or merely use them more sparingly? Players must find out for themselves if they can work around the miniatures, or if they get in the way of the imagination.

2. Combat Situations. There have been great advances in combat systems for role-playing games. Most are played on tabletop maps of some kind, and use either wargame-like counters or some kind of miniatures. Some games go to great detail to list weapons and their uses, along with sometimes convoluted systems for handling fatigue, dexterity penalties and wounds. There is danger here – a danger of getting too complicated.

All you really need for an FRP is a combat system the players believe in and understand. The awful rules I started out with a few years back got us through without horrible problems, despite their lack of detail, because we were seeing the adventure in our minds' eyes. In my mind I was experiencing the trading of harsh blows, and I didn't need any "+4 DX" reminders to give me the thrill of battle.

The new combat systems are an improvement as long as they don't get in the way of the real purpose of the game. The point is to have an adventure, not to come up with miniature rules to simulate Hannibal crossing the Alps. When does a combat system go too far?

Last week, the combat system dominated the whole experience. Players were more concerned about that attack from the rear and the special ability of pike weapons than they were about the wonder of the adventure.

The solution depends on what tradeoffs you want to make between gaming and role-playing. I would not be adverse to hiding the combat map from everyone but the gamemaster – which allows the GM to know specifically what is going on, but forces the players to role-play and imagine instead of working on the best attack odds.

3. Supplements. I shouldn't pick on supplements alone, because they are only part of the same problem that is afflicting a lot of us gamemasters today. We are becoming referees when we're supposed to be storytellers.

A referee is a fellow who tonelessly reads everything out of some book, and pleads "Beats me," whenever the book leaves him in an unexplained crisis. He is an unimaginative role-playing anchorman.

A GM should really be a storyteller. It is his purpose to provide the atmosphere to the adventure – to place moss on the walls, expressions on the monsters' faces, and tension throughout the hostile underground. He is supposed to be describing things in such a way that players will see for themselves just where they are and what is happening. He should be welcoming you to *his* world, or at least to a prepackaged world in which he has taken the time to master and understand – he's not supposed to be a tour guide in a land he's only skimmed through once or twice.

In Summary:

1. Miniatures should be used in a way that fosters the use of the imagination, *not* to replace the imagination.
2. Combat systems should aid the flow of the game, but they shouldn't become more important than role-playing.
3. Gamemasters must learn to create and explain their own special worlds, rather than just throwing bare bones explanations ("Here's a room") at their players.

My concern is that we need to watch what we're doing, so that we know when we are creating a fantasy adventure and when we are merely playing a game. The difference lies in how well we manage to put our imaginations to work.

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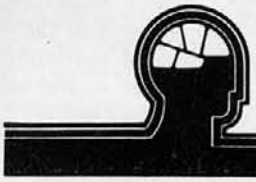

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Featured Review:

The Shattered Alliance

by David Bolduc

THE SHATTERED ALLIANCE, from Strategic Simulations, Inc., is far and away the best attempt I have seen to bring boardgames to the computer hobbyist's CRT. Available for the Apple II, it represents a significant advance in computer gaming.

Game Sequence

The key word here is *speed.* Those of you who have played Strategic Simulations' games are no doubt familiar with the excessive lengths of time that can be spent waiting for the computer to process a turn, or to make its move if you are playing a solitaire game. What Strategic Simulations has done with THE SHATTERED ALLIANCE is to cut down that time drastically – to the point where games can be played quickly and without long, boring waits for something to happen. Another significant development is what Strategic Simulations calls its "Rapidfire" game system. In "Rapidfire," the game, rather than being divided into turns, is divided into "time points." Each unit uses a specified number of time points to perform an action, and will move again after that many time points have passed. The result is a semi-simultaneous movement system, in which you might move one unit, your opponent moves two, then you might move two or three before your opponent has a chance to move again. Because of the staggered movement, only two units fight at a given time. Attack and defense strength are computed for each unit, and losses take place immediately. Combat factors are based on the strengths, armor, and armament of each side as well as the tactical situation of the attacker. All of these are combined with a random number and combat is resolved.

THE SHATTERED ALLIANCE is a tactical level pre-gunpowder (i.e., swords and sorcery) combat game; it is based on the designer's experience playing ancient miniatures using the Wargames Research Group rules. Each player takes one side in a battle, or one player can choose either side and play against the computer.

Once the game diskette is booted, the player may choose between playing a new game, restarting an old game, and creating a new scenario. If he chooses to play a new game, he is given a choice between one of four fantasy scenarios or one of four "historical" scenarios. The computer then displays both armies on the screen one at a time, showing each unit type, training class, weaponry, and numerical strength. The players then choose sides; in the solitaire game, the computer is assigned one side to play.

Display

There are two possible ways to display the map on which combat occurs – the strategic and tactical displays. The strategic display shows the entire field of play, but does not show the hexagonal spaces into which the field of play is divided. The result is that movement direction and range (for fire combat) are difficult to calculate until one becomes familiar with the game. The tactical display, on the other hand, shows the hexes, but only shows a small portion of the field of play, and is further cluttered by a small strategic display which is difficult to see and on which it is almost impossible to distinguish units. It is possible to shift the tactical display, but this can only be done by leaving it. If you do this, or if you wish to see the strategic display in order to be able to tell where all the units are, it is difficult to return to the same tactical display area, as the computer does not remember where you had it. This is a serious shortcoming, which I hope SSI will remedy in the future, but is the only really major one in the game.

Movement of units is quite simple. One merely chooses a movement direction, expressed as a number from 1 to 6 (a chart on the displays shows these), and the unit moves. Movement costs vary both with terrain and type of unit, and the system seems quite well-designed. Another new wrinkle here is the limited amount of time each player may take for a move, which is set at the beginning of the game and keeps the play moving. A player must make up his mind or lose his opportunity to move. Six types of terrain, which affect movement and combat, are provided.

Combat

Two types of combat are possible – both melee and fire combat. Six different melee weapons and three missile weapons are available (with different ranges for each missile weapon). Both types of combat are controlled in much the same way as movement, and results are almost instantaneous. The player may choose to have a detailed description of combat displayed, showing combat and tactical factors for both units, as well as numerical strength, losses, and the results of combat on the morale of the units involved in the combat.

A note of caution here – since the units represented are of widely varying sizes, and are affected by attrition, it is important to keep track of both the size of your units and of your opponents. (A couple of attacks at 1 to 10 odds will teach you this.) Losses from combat lower the effective strength of the units (expressed in numbers of warriors), and occur from every combat – whether attacking or defending. (Even units subjected to missile fire will return fire if they can.) Each victory or defeat has an effect

on the morale of the units involved as well. There appears to be a defect in the line of sight rules for fire combat: In some situations unit A may fire at unit B, while unit B is told that its line of sight is blocked. This situation arises infrequently, but can be infuriating.

This brings us to the morale system, which is another significant advance. There are two levels of morale used in the game – unit morale and army morale. Unit morale is affected by warriors lost, battles won and lost, a unit's training level, and the presence of friendly and enemy units. A unit undergoes a morale check when it attacks after moving, or when a friendly unit within three hexes routs. Depending on the results of the morale check, a unit may follow orders, halt and refuse to move, or rout.

The last two can be extremely disconcerting and affect play drastically, as a player watches his control over his army melt away. Army morale is affected by winning and losing battles, routing units, and the destruction of units. When an army's morale level reaches zero, the battle ends. This adds a new dimension to gaming and makes the game more realistic and, I believe, more enjoyable. The only complaint I have with this system is that the rout moves are not always away from enemy units, and in fact can be in their direction. I also have the feeling (paranoid, I'll admit, and probably totally unfounded) that the computer as a solitaire opponent routs your units so it can win.

In fact, the computer makes a fair opponent, although it is to some extent predictable. For instance, it almost always attempts to take advantage of the rule which permits a unit to initiate fire combat and move in the same turn by moving up its cavalry units, firing, and moving away, since they move at a faster pace than the infantry units. On the whole, it's fun to play against, and plays fairly quickly, although it consistently goes over the time limits set early in the game. However, it is much faster than the computer opponent in the other SSI games I've seen and does not slow up the game to the point of boredom. I'll bet it beats you the first couple of times you play it.

Magic

The final element in the game is magic. In some scenarios, each player is allowed the use of a limited number of spells – Edge Enhancer, Shield, Haste, and Courage – which increase his troops' capabilities for limited periods of time, and add a little unpredictability to the scenarios.

The rulebook is fairly well done, although encumbered by the fact that there are actually only 7 pages of rules in a 15-page rulebook. The rulebook goes on at great length about the "Chronicles of Osgorth," the historical setting for the fantasy scenarios. A serious problem is the almost endless errata which are contained on the diskette. This shows sloppy preparation and is nowhere near as useful as printed errata which can be referred to during a game. I hope SSI will reprint their rulebook to take care of this problem. In this vein, the novice player will probably find the sample game that is played out on the CRT and the introductory scenario more helpful than the rulebook or the reference cards which are included. The prompts and error messages displayed during play are quite useful and are a nice touch.

I'd recommend this game heartily to anyone with an Apple II. It's loads of fun to play, semi-addictive ("I'll beat that !†+$%/&* computer next time, I know I will!"), and fast. Despite the problems with the rules, it represents a significant advance in computer gaming and is well worth the investment.

THE SHATTERED ALLIANCE (SSI); $59.95. 48K disk for the Apple. 1 or 2 players; playing time 1-2 hours. Published 1981.

UNIVERSE III

UNIVERSE III is a computer-moderated correspondence game in which each player commands a starship entering a new universe to explore, colonize, and conquer new worlds, contending with other players and unknown hazards. Each time you send in a turn, the computer will evaluate it with respect to the current game situation and other players' moves, and send you a printout showing your current status. When you "meet" other players, you can send them messages . . . to trade, negotiate, or intimidate.

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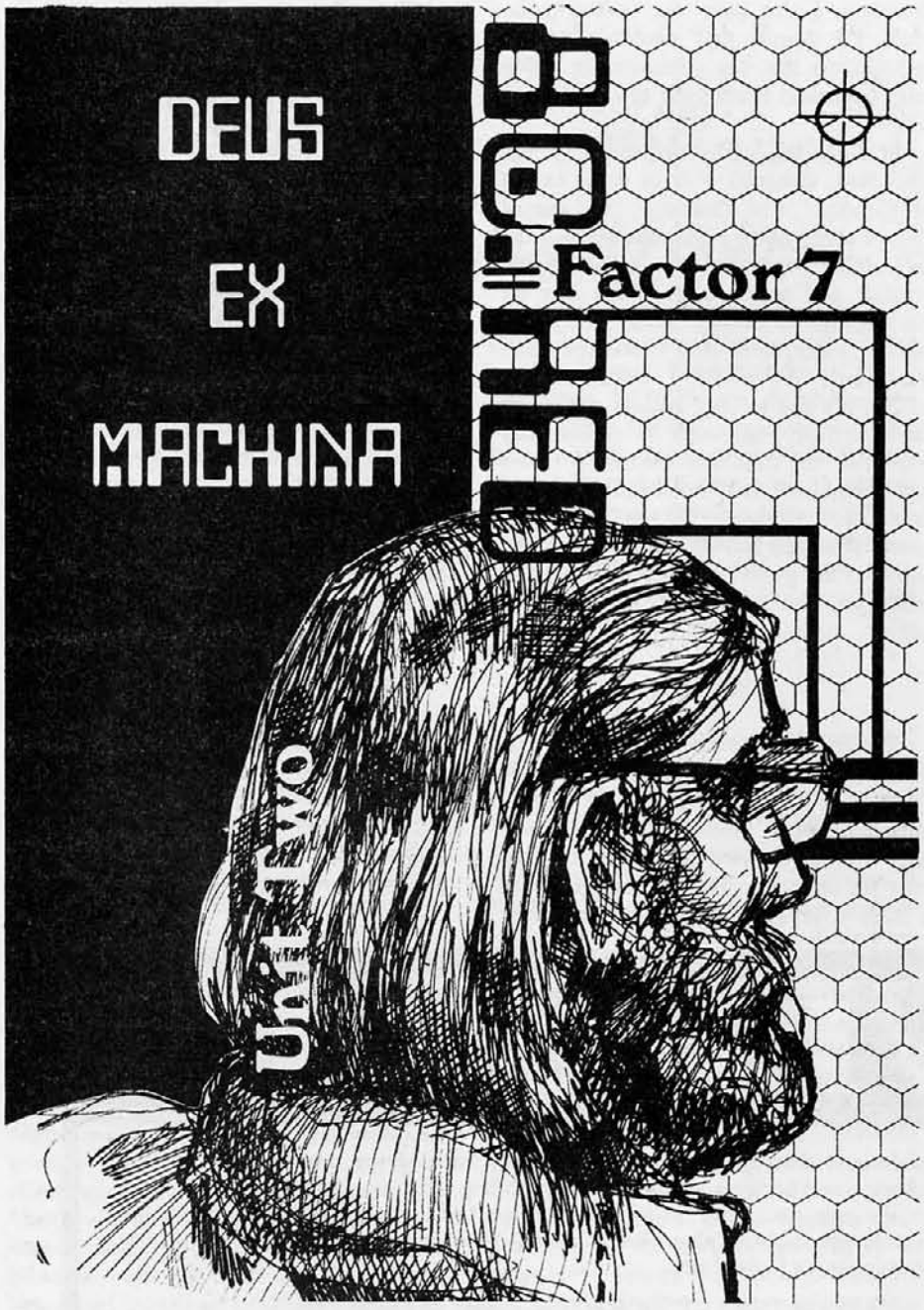


The Name of the Game Is Compromise

by Leo Christopherson

Well, no. Actually the name of the game is *The Voyage of the Valkyrie.* However, I believe that compromise is a word that describes the game of programming games. I have yet to find a computer on which I can do the kind of animated graphics I really want to do. In the meantime, I have grown to appreciate the meaning of the word compromise. To explain, let me give you a compromised history of the game *Valkyrie.*

The TRS-80 Version

Valkyrie began with a suggestion that I write a TRS-80 version of *Space Invaders.* The idea was to include some of my animated graphics to make the game more unique. But, as I began to think about the idea, I found that I just didn't was to write another one of those *Space Invaders* programs. So I decided to switch the idea around and make the player be the invader. The player must capture something back from the aliens to win.

With that idea in mind, I next began to look for some sort of character to represent the aliens. "Let's see," I said to myself, "how about these armed troopers that would jump in from the sides to the screen and move forward and back as they shot at the player?" No, that would probably require a higher resolution graphics than that available on the TRS-80. I had already come to my first compromise. The TRS-80 has what I call medium resolution graphics. That means a great deal of work goes into finding graphics characters that convey the effect I'm after. Many things simply are not possible.

After a few more false starts, I came to the idea of bird-like creatures. They would have the advantage of being able to move all over the screen and would thus provide better targets than foot soldiers. It seemed to me that the flapping of wings would be a rather interesting sort of animation to try.

"Very well," I decided, "bird creatures it is!"

Now I began to make the drawings for all of the various positions that would be needed to represent the birds in flight. I needed to keep it down to as few as possible in order to conserve memory. Here is another compromise. Since I wanted the program to come to as many TRS-80 owners as possible, I had to make it run on the basic 16K machine. Otherwise, I'd end up writing a different version for each TRS-80 configuration. I finally settled on fifteen positions: five front views, five right side views, and five left side views.

Next came one of the most exciting parts of programming for me. I put the graphics data into the TRS-80 and added some test lines to animate a bird. It was a thrill for me to see one of those doggone little guys flapping around the screen! At that point I felt that I actually had the start of something good.

"Good enough," I decided, "fifteen data arrays will do."

"Imagine it," I told myself, "a whole screen full of birds moving every which-a-way." Something like that would be interesting just to watch, be it part of a game or not!

So I set up the program to run nine birds and ran right into another problem. The birds moved so slowly that they became much too jerky in their movements. I cut back the number of birds. The computer could handle up to four birds well enough, five maybe marginally, but no more. This compromise involved the

operating speed of the Z-80 balanced against the amount of graphics to be dumped to the screen and the amount of computation needed to change each bird's position. I couldn't seem to find a faster way to do the job.

"OK, OK, for God's sake," I decided, "I'll settle for a maximum of four birds."

By this time I knew that I wanted the game to involve going from one place to another, searching for castles where the birds would be found. "This is going to be sort of like an adventure game," I figured. "There will be thirty or forty castles to be found." But this plan was thwarted both by the size of the memory and by the amount of information that can be displayed at one time on the screen. For the game to play smoothly, I wanted all castles' names to appear on the screen at once, along with information about the status of the game.

"Well, what the hell," I decided, "I guess ten castles should be plenty, at that."

I suppose you get the idea by now. There were compromises when I set up the part where the birds fly at the player. There were compromises when I set up the part where the player fires at the birds. Here, it was mostly a matter of running speed. Every addition to the program now caused it to run a little bit slower.

As the game neared completion, the major problem became memory space. The selections from Wagner were added. I felt that such music in a program like this one gave the program a lot of class, made it well-rounded.

The game was finally done. I turned it over to my students at school for playtesting. The inevitable bugs turned up but were quickly exterminated. Watching the kids play the game indicated to me that the game was a good one.

Conversion to Apple

The next step was to write a version of *Valkyrie* for the Apple computer. I suppose most people would say, "Since the Apple has high-res color graphics and lots of memory to work with (most Apple owners seem to have 48K machines with disk drives), it should be a cinch to write *Valkyrie* on that machine." But I had written high-res color graphics for the Apple before and I knew that that just wasn't so.

One of the first problems one comes up against is the much greater amount of memory needed for high-res. One can fill the TRS-80 screen by dumping about 1000 bytes to it. The Apple takes about 8000. Not only does this mean lots more memory space is required to store graphics, but lots more time is involved in dumping it to the screen memory.

My kind of graphics is called "cartoon graphics." The usual Apple shape table approach is not suited to this type of graphics. So I worked out the fastest way I could find to put graphics directly from memory to the screen. I knew that it would really have to be fast in order to counter the slowing effect of high-res. Then, patterning them after the TRS-80 versions, I drew up the fifteen bird positions.

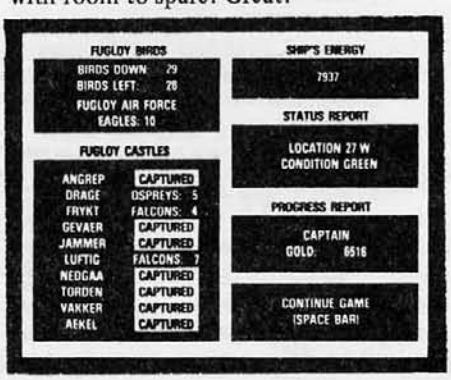
My troubles started when I put the first front view on the screen, using only white for color. In high-res, the bird had color splotches and odd-colored edges, though on the black and white monitor, the bird looked about as I had planned. I understood the problem; I had had to deal with it before. The Apple uses a rather odd "7-bits-to-a-byte" color code. But also, it uses 2 bits to define a color. This causes all sorts of problems when one wants certain colors to be very close to certain other colors. Some combinations are simply impossible. I'm not trying to explain why this happens. I just bring it up as an example of still another area of compromise.

In order to get stable graphics and color, I needed to use two bits per graphic dot on the screen. That meant the horizontal resolution was now 140, rather than 280. (That's not a whole lot better than the TRS-80's horizontal resolution of 128, by the way.) This, in turn, meant cutting back on the vertical resolution so that the figures on the screen wouldn't look all "pinched up" vertically.

"Very well," I decided, "I'll have to use less than the highest resolution. But this will still give much better vertical resolution than the TRS-80 has."

My next step was the fun one! I animated one bird and prayed that I had found enough ways to speed things up to counteract the high-res problems. I had! That little fellow zoomed around the screen like a hummingbird, wings almost a blur!

But could the Apple control at least four birds quickly enough? Yes, it could, with room to spare! Great!



However, by the time I began to add background, it was apparent that four birds should still be the maximum number. No problem.

"Good enough," I decided, "the program is still at least as good as the TRS-80 version."

Dumping Color

So far, the birds and the background castle were white; no color yet. Now I modified things to add color and was dismayed at the result. The whole thing looked pretty bad on a black and white monitor, but then most people buying the game would be using color sets, I presumed. But there were nasty things happening on the color screen, too.

For example, when a bird figure moved one byte to the left or right, it changed to another color! Well, of course, I had seen that one before, too. It meant that I would have to have an "even byte" version and a completely separate "odd byte" version of all fifteen bird arrays – a total of thirty arrays! That'd double the bird memory requirements.

Not only that, but there were problems at the edges of the colored figures. They didn't quite always start or end where I had planned for them to. This problem results from that "7-bits-to-a-byte" business. The effect was that the birds' edges moved in and out as they flew. Have you ever seen a bird breathe with its head? Well, even if they are aliens, that's going too far for me!

Another truly ghastly effect of adding color occurred when a bird crossed over a castle or across another bird. The color bit patterns really got tangled up there! The whole overlap area became a technicolor nightmare!

It became obvious that *Valkyrie* as I knew it wouldn't be possible on the Apple with color. Do I sacrifice color, or do I give up having four birds that can move freely throughout the screen? Having the birds and background in white would solve all these color difficulties and also save memory space.

"Alright, already," I decided, "who

needs color?"

I could see why so very few animated cartoon graphics programs existed for the Apple!

The Graphics Pinch

The next important compromise centered around the amount of memory available in a 48K, disk Apple. One might think that a 48K Apple has to have much more user memory space than the 16K TRS-80. It's not as good as it looks at first. In fact I've found that they're pretty close to being equivalent in this respect. The TRS-80 has its screen memory set apart from user memory. Not so, the Apple. The Apple's high-res is generated from 8K of user memory. To make matters worse, animation can require the programmer to use both high-res memory areas in the Apple. That's 16K gone from the user memory! And then there's the disk operating system. That takes about 10K more. About 2K at the start of the memory is gone for "housekeeping." So we have about 20K left. But wait, remember graphics in high-res take more memory space to store. So, as I say, I find the two machines roughly equivalent when it comes to user memory space.

Would I be able to get the program to run quickly without the loading-from-disk delays that occur in so many large scale Apple adventure programs? I needed to allow the player to travel quickly from place to place. I hated to think of having to load the graphics data for each new background from disk every time one moved to a new location. And yet, a high-res background could require so much memory (up to 8K each) that the data for all sixty locations couldn't possibly be stored in the machine at once.

The problem was to try to store the castles' data in the machine in arrays as small as possible, and then to work up some way to generate a variety of backgrounds from a certain few background data arrays. My answer was to develop a way to add more extra horizontal lines for each data array horizontal line. Thus, a high-res mountain background could be drawn as if far away, or closer, depending upon the added number of horizontal repeated lines. The unfortunate effect of this was to make the mountains appear to be less and less high-res the more the vertical magnification. But I figured I could live with this compromise since it saved space, gave me more variety per array, and made the program play faster.

"So, what the hell," I decided, "these background areas are not where the action usually happens, anyway. Most players will be moving quickly through these locations looking for birds and castles."

Though more compromises were necessary, I did, at last, finish the program for the Apple. It included some features not possible on the TRS-80: game paddle or joystick control, the ability to save a game to disk, stereo sound output using the tape out as well as the Apple's own speaker out, and a few other lesser touches to enhance playing the game.

I am pleased with the final results. I have a real time game which plays fast and gives arcade action with an adventure background.

Conclusion

I have purposely given the impression of increasing frustration as the two versions of the game were developed. There's no doubt that programming can be very frustrating! But, in fact, I think that it is this very sort of thing that keeps me doing it. I enjoy the challenge! I have found that if I am willing to compromise, I can always end up with a program fairly close to what I envisioned at the start. Some people ask me why I would bother to write for the TRS-80 with its poorer graphic capabilities. Well, it's the challenge, you see!

"Thank God," I decided, "I've finished another game!"

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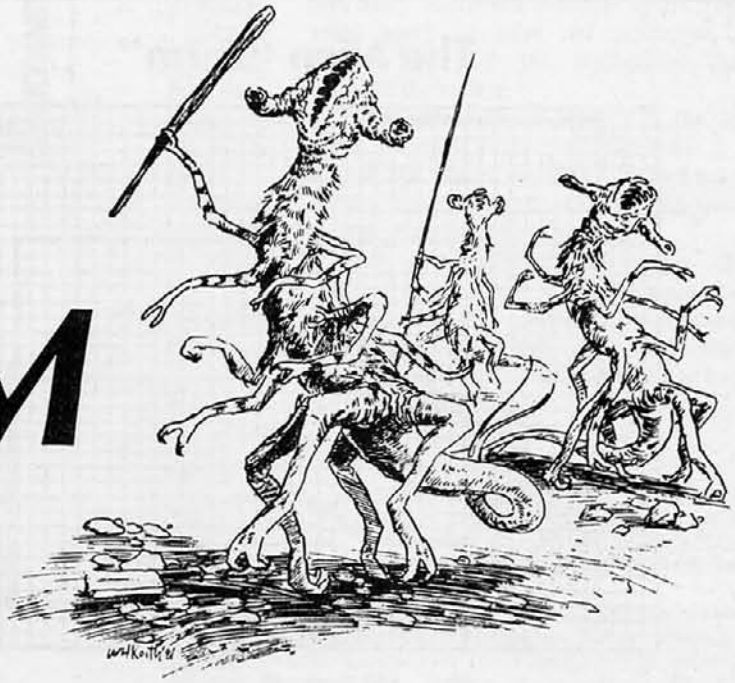
STORM



by William H.

&

J. Andrew Keith

In "Flare Star" (December, 1981), adventurers discovered a derelict alien ship, crewed only by corpses of two radically different alien races. Lacking jump drive, the ship had apparently travelled below lightspeed to reach the unsettled double star system where it was found. The ship used advanced technology – fusion power and gravity drives – but had no computers or other microelectronics components on board.

A clue from the ship's lighting system pointed to a nearby blue-white sun as the home of the vessel's builders. Caledon Ventures, a mercantile firm, sensed profits in the chance of selling computer systems to the aliens. The adventurers, a trade pioneer team in Caledon's employ, have been sent to investigate the system and discover the feasibility of contacting – and selling to – the shipbuilders.

Referee's note: The star, a blue-white giant, is a young, hot star with a single planet – possibly captured – in an eccentric orbit. The planet has been named "Storm" as a result of the unusual number and violence of severe weather patterns observed from orbit. Planetary code for the world is currently E774800. Information on physical aspects of the UPP are available to players.

This folio adventure is designed for characters of almost any background attached to a Trade Pioneer Team aboard the Type A2 Far Trader *Scotian Huntress*. The referee may draw characters from any source desired, including existing campaigns. It is urged that characters have some skill in ground combat.

Two scientist non-player characters are required for play of this adventure. Character generation information may be found in GDW Supplement 4, *Citizens of the Imperium*. Details on the statistics, performance, and layout of the Far Trader are not necessary for this adventure, but can be found in Supplement 7, *Traders and Gunboats*. Almost any other *Traveller* book, supplement, game, or adventure may enhance the enjoyment of this adventure, as well.

Background: They'd named the planet Storm . . . and the name was well-deserved. During their descent from orbit, the crew of the *Scotian Huntress* had felt the buffeting winds and watched the raging lightning of one of the "smaller" storms. Then lightning hit the ship itself, not once, but several times, scrambling the electronics on board and causing dangerous power surges. The pilot fought the Far Trader down . . . and somehow, miraculously, they landed in one piece. But there was heavy damage to the ship, damage that would take hours to repair before the *Scotian Huntress* could lift once more.

While the crew began making repairs, the trade pioneer team set out to study the new world. The ship was down in a barren wilderness. Conditions outside were far from pleasant . . . temperatures at 35°C, with a high atmospheric ozone content that made respirator masks mandatory. But recordings made during final landing showed signs of civilization beyond a ridge that rose some 30 km to the east. The team, including two expedition scientists, set out to investigate aboard the ship's air/raft, hoping to make contact with friendly natives.

The ridge: On the crest overlooking a wide, shallow valley, the adventurers discovered buildings surrounded by a low wall. The buildings commanded a view of the valley proper, and the alien city that stood there. A pall of black smoke rose from countless fires burning uncontrolled among the city buildings. Beyond, half-hidden by the smoke, they glimpsed a huge, squat shape looming on a cliff, a massive, brooding structure with the look of a fortress or mausoleum.

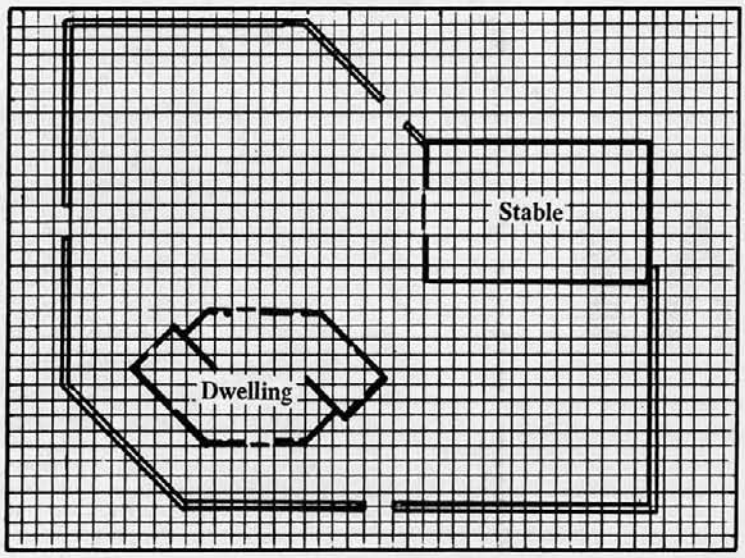
An urgent call from the ship interrupted speculation and discussion among the party. The air/raft was needed to move heavy equipment at the ship. But the expedition xenologist had discovered two domestic animals – the first species of native animal life found on Storm – in a "stable" among the cluster of buildings. Much could be learned here . . . so the team leader made a decision. The air/raft pilot returned to the ship, leaving the rest of the team to assist the scientists in investigating the buildings and the two animals. Later, the air/raft could return.

Before long, everyone in the party would regret that decision . . .

Referee's Notes

The buildings: The floor plan shows the layout of the small complex of buildings on the ridge. The largest building contains various implements and furnishings that lead to the conclusion that it is a dwelling. Furniture – ½ meter tall

The Alien "Farm"



tables and broad, shallow circular depressions – is reminiscent of that used in the alien probe that first led the adventurers to Storm, proof that they are on the right track. The interior of the building shows signs of violence, and one corner holds a small pile of dry cartilaginous bones from some alien creature.

Ceilings are 2 meters high and covered with fluorescent panels that give off a harsh, white light. Doors are only one meter tall (adventurers must crawl through). Windows are flat, narrow slits, once glassed over, but now broken, set ½ meter above the ground.

The area designated as "stable" is a windowless building constructed of silvery, reflective metal. The door was originally secured with a heavy, complicated lock (the xenologist shot this off with a laser to enter). Scratches and dents on the door show attempts to force it open – they were there when the buildings were first examined. Inside the stable it is a cool 20°C. Low troughs filled with vegetable matter and two eight-legged, slug-bodied animals are the only things found within.

The alien attack: Several hours after the departure of the air/raft, a large number of alien creatures are seen moving up the ridge towards the characters. Other bands of aliens are seen moving about in other directions, converging on the site they have called "the farm." Examination shows them to be tall, four-armed, four-legged tubular aliens, each nearly two meters tall. Except for size, they are identical to the small alien corpses found aboard the derelict ship.

The aliens are a mob, without clear organization or leadership. They carry clubs, crude spears, rocks, and torches. Attempts to communicate with them will fail; they are interested in nothing but destruction and finding food – anything living. They will attack the party at the farm by rushing the buildings or by setting fire to them. Captured or killed adventurers will be dragged off and eaten.

Attacks are made in waves, consisting of 1dx10 natives in each wave. Before each wave attacks, the referee rolls 1dx5 to determine the number of casualties they will take before fleeing. Once they have fled, they will reorganize for another attack 1d hours later. During this period, players will be able to move around the farm area, but an attempt to escape cross-country will be met by renewed assaults. For game purposes, assume an unlimited supply of aliens (several hundred). These will continue to attack until they win, or the adventuers are rescued by the air/raft.

The animals: Within hours of being discovered (before the first native attack), the two animals found in the stable will become sick, lying on their sides, panting, and licking at a number of basketball-sized swellings developing on their bodies. The expedition xenologist will venture the opinion that they are suffering from some parasitical disease, but can do nothing to help them. Eighteen hours after the sickness develops, they die within minutes of each other. The swellings, though, continue to grow. If one is opened, a slender, 8-legged animal will be discovered within, snake-thin, with a toothy mouth with which it is busy eating its way out of the larger creature.

Four hours after the animals die, ten swellings on each carcass burst, releasing a total of 20 animals (less any released previously). Each is ½ meter long and quite vicious, attacking the nearest available adventurer, and continuing to attack until it is dead.

After careful study of both life forms, the xenologist will conclude that the two are actually the same species, in adult and juvenile forms. An as-yet-unknown trigger causes the growth of the offspring as buds within an animal. The adult eventually dies, furnishing food for the young as they emerge. The two forms are different enough to suggest that some unknown stimulus eventually causes a metamorphosis from juvenile to adult.

Conditions on Storm: Breathing masks must be worn at all times. Other equipment may be selected from the ship's locker before the adventure begins. The referee should decide what gear can be carried, based on the needs of the adventure and the experience of the group.

Short, violent storms are the chief natural danger on Storm. They may appear at almost any time (at the referee's discretion) with about 5d minutes' notice. When a storm hits, visibility is reduced to medium range, persons outside have all stats reduced by half for the duration of the storm (or until they reach cover), and lightning becomes a severe danger. Each individual not under cover during a storm will be struck and killed by lightning on a roll of 12. Roll 2d6 every 5 minutes. Air/rafts will be hit on a roll of 9+; during a storm it is impossible for an air/raft to fly. The storm will last for 4d minutes, then disperse as quickly as it began.

Animal encounter information for creatures encountered in this adventure is as follows:

Animal Type	Weight	Hits	Armor	Wounds + Weapons	
2 Intermittants	50 kg	17/6	Cloth	3 horns	A9F952
20 Killers	.5 kg	2/2	None	4 teeth	A0F053
– Hunters (Natives)	100 kg	20/9	None	Varies	A0F052

Ending the adventure: The air/raft has been delayed by a severe, lingering storm around the ship, a storm which has also cut all communications. Massive, swirling thunderclouds over the landing site will be visible to the adventurers, but there will be no way of telling how long the condition will last. After 20 hours, the referee should indicate that they detect a gradual clearing over the ship. 2d hours later the air/raft will arrive. Gunfire from the air/raft will disperse any native attack long enough for the adventurers to get aboard. Once an escape has been made, the adventure is over.

Continuing the campaign: On returning to the ship, the adventurers will find that repairs have been made, and the ship jury-rigged enough to make limited maneuvers. The adventurers can choose to leave Storm, carrying the information they have gathered so far back to Caledon Ventures so that a better-equipped expedition can be sent later. In this case, they will be rewarded a commission of CR 500,000 apiece 3d months later.

If they prefer, however, the adventurers can choose to continue exploring Storm, hoping to complete their mission themselves. This allows further adventuring. Future issues of *The Space Gamer* will carry additional material as the trade team seeks to solve the mysteries of Storm and find the civilization that brought them here.

Final notes: The discovery of the unusual life cycle of Storm's native life is a key to the overall campaign. Players must survive the native attacks to bring word of their discoveries to the ship.

The "fortress" sighted beyond the burning city should leave an impression of great size and technological prowess, and should suggest itself as a natural place to seek further information on the natives in later adventures.

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TSG BACK ISSUES

No. 15. Wizard and Olympica designer intros; Robotics in Traveller; Floating Hulks; Ogre Update; Orcs and their Weapons; computer gaming.

No. 16. WarpWar article; Classics Simulated in Melee; Alpha Omega; Demons! (Moties in Melee); 1977 game survey results – and a LOT of reviews.

No. 17. GEV designer's intro; strategy for Chitin: I; variants for Imperium, Melee, and a combination Ogre/Rivets variant; WarpWar fiction.

No. 18. IceWar designer's intro; variant scenarios for Invasion: America and War of the Ring; additional equipment for Traveller; mounted Melee; "Referee, Declare Thyself!" (role-playing GM technique).

No. 19. POND WAR; variant units and scenarios for GEV; combining Imperium and WarpWar; Battlefleet Mars variant; reviews of Swords & Sorcery, RuneQuest, and Raumkrieg; MicroGame design article.

No. 20. Olympica tactics; Psionics in Traveller; TARTARS & MARTYRS; Reality in Melee; designer's optional rules for Ice War; designer's article on Starships & Spacemen; "Rip-Off Blues" (wargaming frauds).

No. 21. Interview with Dave Arneson; running a MicroGame tournament; tactics for Ogre and GEV; spaceship miniatures; Black Hole variant rules, putting the Deryni into Melee; more reviews.

No. 22. Ice War tactics; Black Hole physics; PARTY BRAWL; 1978 SF/fantasy game survey results; Fantasy Trip short story.

No. 23. Invasion of the Air Eaters designer's article; Ogre meets Ice War; Sticks & Stones expansion; Vikings and Valde in The Fantasy Trip.

No. 24. Black Hole designer's intro; "The Psychology of Wargaming"; Naval Melee; "The Four-Howitzer Defense in Ogre;" variants for Chitin: I, The Creature that Ate Sheboygan, and John Carter of Mars.

No. 25. Stellar Conquest issue . . . designer's article, tournament tactics, and variant scenarios; also – strategy in Rivets; benefit-cost analysis for Ice War; "Everyday Life in The Fantasy Trip."

No. 26. Oneworld designer's intro; tactics in GEV; variations on Wizard; computers in wargaming; Life-sized Melee; and a variant that puts human forces into Rivets.

No. 27. Hot Spot's designer's intro; Time Travel; Nuke the Air Eaters (gaming atomic war); Weapons for Hobbits in TFT; Muskets in TFT; Game Design Part 1; 5 pages of game reviews.

No. 28. 1979 Game Survey results; Overmen in TFT; A Guide to SF/Fantasy Game Publishers; Task Force Games report; Writers' and Artists' guides; 7 pages of reviews; Game Design Part 2; Deus Ex Machina.

No. 29. Fantasy Trip designer's intro; Painting Fantasy Miniatures; Fantasy and SF game magazines surveyed; Game Design Part 3; more Deus Ex Machina; 7 pages of reviews.

No. 30. KUNG FU 2100; Painting Fantasy Miniatures Part II; Index to Game Articles; Game Design Part 4; Programmable Calculators; 10 pages of reviews.

No. 31. "Sam Beowulf"; 1980 Game Software survey; Game Design Part 5; Random Maze Generation; 9 pages of reviews.

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No. 33. Play-by-mail issue: Feature reviews of four PBM games, a Warp War Campaign, Survey of PBM companies; also, Contest Report; Company Report from Schubel and Son; "End Game;" GEV scenario; Game Design Part 7; Deus Ex Machina; The Good Guys, Part I; and 10 pages of reviews.

No. 34. Miniatures issue: Cardboard Heroes Designer's Notes, LOTR Miniatures, Painting Fantasy Miniatures Advanced Techniques, Survey of miniatures manufacturers; also "The Challenge;" Artifact Designer's Notes and Expansion Rules; 3-D Displays II; Game Design Part 8; Wish Contest winner; and 8 pages of reviews.

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No. 44. Special feature: AFVs in Traveller; Beware the Uranium Dragon; Fantasy Demography; another scenario for Killer; Featured review of Universe; Deus Ex Machina; and 8 pages of reviews.

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ACADEMY OF ADVENTURE GAMING ARTS & DESIGN
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for the year 1981, to be presented at ORIGINS '82, July 23, 24, 25, 1982, in Baltimore, Maryland
(for information about Origins '82, write PO Box 15405, Baltimore, MD 21220)

The Origins Awards, presented at Origins each year, are an international, popular series of awards aimed at recognizing outstanding achievements in Adventure Gaming. They comprise the Charles Roberts Awards for Boardgaming, and the H.G. Wells Awards for Miniatures and Role-Playing Games. An international Awards Committee of 25 hobbyists (some professionals, but primarily independents) directs and administers the awards system. The nomination ballot is open to all interested gamers. YOUR VOTE can make a real difference! A final ballot is prepared by the committee and voted on by members of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design. Academy membership, $2/year, is open to active, accomplished hobbyists, both pro and amateur. Membership guidelines are available for a SASE from the addresses given below. Correspondence should be sent to the USA address. Present members may renew by sending their check with this ballot. Canadians may send $2 Canadian, payable to Mike Girard. UK and European members may send 1 pound sterling payable to Ian Livingstone. US and all others may send US $2, payable to Bill Somers.

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Instructions. Read Carefully: Print legibly or type your nominations. Ballots that are messy, not filled out correctly, or show attempts at stuffing will not be counted. You may list three nominees per category. It does not matter in what order you list them. To keep the voting as meaningful as possible, do not make selections in unfamiliar categories. YOU MUST SIGN THE BALLOT! And include your address. You may vote only once, and send only one ballot per envelope.

Nominations should be for products produced during the calendar year 1981. Exceptions are permitted for older products which gain significant exposure and acclaim during 1981. Miniature figure series nominations should be for product lines which are either new or have been substantially expanded in 1981. All Time Best nominations are not restricted to 1981, of course.

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All Adventure Gamers are encouraged to vote!

Deadline– March 31, 1982.

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(referring to the first release of a boardgame by a new company)
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The following categories recognize outstanding achievement in Adventure Gaming in general.

17. Best 1981 Adventure Game for Home Computer: _____
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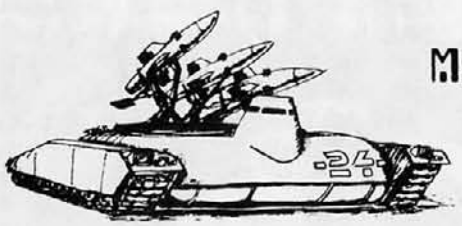

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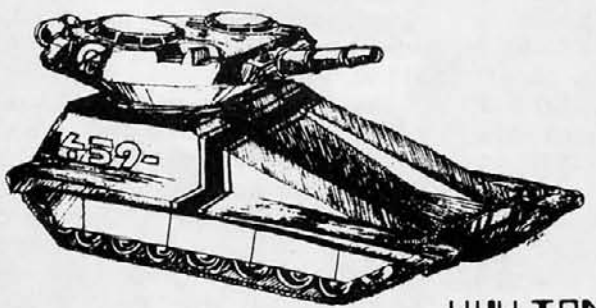
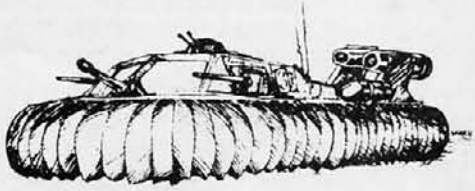


HVY TANK



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Miniatures for FRP Games

by Spalding Boldrick

Chances are, you've already shelled out quite a few bucks for the basics of your role-playing game, and would like to get the miniatures best suited to it, without having to file for bankruptcy. Everywhere you look you see miniatures packs labelled "Official D&D Miniatures" or "Approved for use with Advanced D&D" or "Suitable for all fantasy role-playing games." So which ones are best for you?

There is no single best answer. "Offical" figure lines are frequently overpriced, and often less suitable than those without official approval. The answer really depends on what is important to you in a miniature and what best suits your style of play. I'll try to deal with these factors company by company, concentrating mainly on character types, since they will be the first concern of anyone just beginning to acquire FRP gaming miniatures.

Ral Partha, Superior and **Broadsword** miniatures constitute a class by themselves in terms of quality of material and casting, detail, and anatomical accuracy. They are frequently available as individual figures, thus enabling you to select exactly the figure you need without being forced to buy others you may not want. They are, however, expensive. Character figures tend to run around a dollar, even in multi-packs. Ral Partha does offer a larger boxed set of eight wizards and clerics for $6.49 and another of eight adventurers for $6.98. This works out to around $ .80-$ .85 per figure, and the two sets would meet most of your character needs, if the style appeals to you.

That style is another factor to be considered. While virtually faultless otherwise, the figures from all three of these manufacturers are sometimes static-looking, almost as though they were posing for a portrait. They often seem to be designed more as collector's items than as gaming pieces. This tendency is less notable in the newer releases, however, and is not really much of a drawback unless you're specifically looking for action poses.

Ral Partha also puts out what are, with very few exceptions, the only really convincing female character figures. Finding believable women characters has been a problem in fantasy miniatures for some time now; a legacy, I think, of the attitude toward women in the earlier FRP games. Ral Partha, at least, seems to be making a serious effort to address the problem.

Of the three companies mentioned so far, only Ral Partha offers a sizable number of monster types. Their humanoid monster types (goblins, imps, giants, etc.), especially the newer releases, are the best available. They are much more action-oriented than the character types; and are a good, extensive (and expensive) line. Broadsword has a beautiful Harryhausen-type cyclops that's hard to resist once you've seen it.

On the other hand, if your most important criterion in selecting a miniature is low cost, then **Grenadier** may have what you need. They offer a nicely boxed set of ten characters, all the same type (wizards, thieves, etc.) but different poses, for $6.98. An even greater savings is available in their boxed assortment of twenty different character types for $13.50. This works out to less than $ .70 per figure, and is not inconsiderable savings over the most expensive figures; especially if you intend to buy a large number of figures to begin with.

Grenadier miniatures are more variable in quality, and tend to be clunky-looking. The characters are frequently cursed with faces that only a mother (or a DM) could love, and sometimes sport anatomical anomalies seldom seen outside medical textbooks. There are exceptions, though, and occasionally a Grenadier figure is really first rate. The poses of the figures are more action-oriented and less static than the more expensive figures. The metal used in Grenadier miniatures has a slightly higher tin content than those already discussed (with the exception of Superior), and are more brittle and thus harder to modify or animate. This is not necessarily a drawback in a gaming miniature, since it means a dropped figure is only likely to chip some paint rather than bend all out of shape.

Grenadier also offers an extensive line of less expensive monsters, the best value being a boxed set of twenty monsters for $13.50.

Citadel miniatures are in roughly the same class as Grenadier, being a little more expensive at about $ .85 per character figure. They are frequently available singly, are usually better cast than Grenadier, and offer a good variety of characters and poses, although they, too, tend toward the ugly side. The best thing about Citadel figures is something that's

almost entirely missing in fantasy miniatures and FRP games generally: a sense of humor. They manage to produce a product of reasonably good quality without taking themselves or their subject matter too seriously. If a lighter style of play and a touch of whimsy appeal to you, then you ought to take a look at this line. Citadel also has a fair variety of monster types, including some highly unusual ones, that share the good qualities and reasonable prices of the character figures.

The only other company notable for an occasional sense of humor is **Archive.** Their product is extremely variable in every respect, varying from sometimes excellent to downright bad. Their character figures tend to be very large, and almost always stand out in a group of figures from different manufacturers, not always to good effect. They sometimes go on using molds long after they have become too badly damaged to produce a good casting, and can be so variable in quality that it is difficult to recommend them. Their figures do have a certain dash, or style, or verve, or whatever, that's difficult to describe and is sometimes very effective. Their monsters are often very good, and they turn out some most unusual types: they have the *biggest* damned manticore I've ever seen, and offer the only line of such character types available. Their prices are moderate to expensive.

Martian Metals is another moderately priced line of figures which almost invariably offers good quality materials and casting. The style and pose of the figures are also good, if unremarkable; a few of their wizard figures are exceptionally good. Martian Metals also offers a line of pirates if you're looking for a swashbuckler type. In addition, Martian Metals has an excellent line of 15mm fantasy characters and monsters, if you are interested in gaming with smaller (and much less expensive) miniatures. And while we're on the subject of swashbucklers, **Gray Cat Castings** has a small, new, and reasonably priced line, including several swashbuckler types of the Three Musketeers variety.

Minifigs is another company with a variable product. The quality of casting is always first rate, and detailing is always clean and crisp, but the style and imagination of the figures varies so much from line to line that it's almost as if they were being produced by different companies. For example, I've always found their old "Official D&D" line to be dull and unimaginative, but their Valley of the Four Winds series is excellent in both imagination and execution. The Greyhawk series is somewhere in between, but largely quite good. One drawback to almost all Minifigs figures: everybody tends to look alike, as though the entire world suffered from a high degree of inbreeding. Minifigs fantasy figures are usually available only in multi-packs, and are moderately priced.

Heritage is something of a mixed bag, also. The older lines, such as Fantastiques, are usually pretty good, comparable to Grenadier in price, and a little better in quality and sculpting. Some of the newer lines, like the Lord of the Rings miniatures, are fairly well done, if a bit overpriced. But a few of the newest lines, like the Dungeon Dwellers, are not only overpriced, but cast in metal whose tin content is so high that you're apt to break them while trying to clean up the mold lines. Generally not worth it, as far as I'm concerned. **Hinchliffe** miniatures, distributed by Heritage, are similar in appearance and quality to the Heritage Fantastiques line, and are not a bad buy when you can find them.

A short survey of this sort cannot hope to cover all the myriad of manufacturers around today. Some of them aren't worth the effort to review; others, especially some of the British companies, are almost impossible to find, anyway. The main thing to remember is that no one manufacturer is the last word in all types of miniatures. Weigh the factors that are important to you in a gaming miniature, and shop around.

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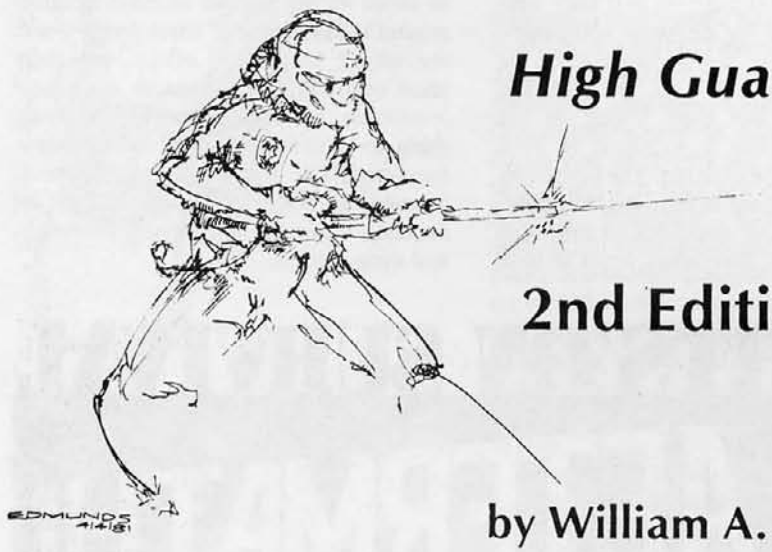


High Guard, 2nd Edition

by William A. Barton

Many of the flaws of the first edition of *High Guard* are corrected in HIGH GUARD 2. The combat system has been overhauled and considerably improved, though it is more complex now. Black globes are handled in a more realistic fashion. Weaponry is limited by the amount of energy consumed. The use of "batteries" of weapons makes it much simpler to calculate the overall weapons factors of each ship. Other changes and additions (such as ship agility, limits to the number of batteries that can bear in combat and the conversion of several tonnage-based components to percentage bases) either streamline the ship construction rules or add more realism to the combat system.

Of course, some items had to be condensed – or dropped altogether – in order to fit the new information into the same amount of pages. Thus, in the introductory section, the weaponry descriptions are much briefer than in the 1st edition, and show some changes: Particle accelerators, for instance, have been removed from the anti-missile role here and elsewhere in the book (odd in light of current military thinking). Several options have been dropped from the combat section, including the two damage rolls for pulse lasers (though they do get a DM on the damage table), the use of fusion drives as weapons, high intensity missile fire and orbital combat rules. Some optional components for starships – missile magazines for planetary bombardment and jump governors for Book 2 ships – seem no longer to be available either. (Those of you who still have your 1st editions will probably want to make use of some of these rules in your individual play; for those with only the second edition, I suggest finding someone with the first if you want to do any planetary bombardment, etc.)

There are other items that were rather important that seem to have been overlooked, too, in this edition – and not by design I would guess.

High Guard 1 failed to tell how many pilots were needed aboard a starship to fly the vessel itself. The 2nd edition overlooks this point as well (though the new *Trillion Credit Squadron* enlightens the perplexed fleet commander on this). The 2nd edition also apparently assumes that no one is ever going to get sick aboard a starship, as the medical section of the crew no longer exists. An even more serious omission is the lack of information on the new coding system for fighters carried. In the breakdown of the USP on page 52, there is the notation that the number of fighters is the number of fighter *squadrons* carried. There is no further information on this anywhere in the book, no tables for determining codes, no explanation of how many fighters make up a squadron. However, from the *Trillion Credit Squadron*, it can be deduced that the typical squadron consists of 10 fighters and the coding system figured from there (or from the old table if you have the 1st edition).

In edition 1 a starship could carry a wide variety of vehicles, including such exotics as fixed-wing aircraft, dirigibles, helicopters and submersibles. Now, vessels are limited to ground cars, ATVs, hovercraft and air/rafts. Of course, the missing items are not overly important in starship battles or in most campaigns, but their loss is another reason to hang onto your 1st editions, especially since skill in these vehicles is still available in the character generation system.

Another problem that the 2nd edition should have cleared up but didn't is the crew factor codes. The jumps between the numbers of crewmen from each code number to the next are far too great, especially considering that a crew hit drops the crew factor by 1. Thus if I have a crew of 99,999 (code 5) and take a crew hit, I've lost at least 90,000 crewmen in order for my factor to be dropped to a 4. A second hit will take the lives of 9,000 more crewmen, a third 900 and on down. Perhaps this is a realistic loss of life with such heavy weaponry, but then why would the same weapon hitting a ship with 9,999 crewmen only kill 9,000 men when it killed 90,000 on another ship?

One confusing change was that of the fuel purification plants. A plant cost a straight 200,000Cr and weighed 50 tons, cost and weight decreasing a set amount per tech level. Plants processed a ton of fuel per minute. In the new edition, a table shows the same decreases but, along with the text, says that the price is per 1000 tons of fuel. The text further states that ships with large tanks need more than one plant, presumably one per 1000 tons of fuel tank. How long fuel processing takes is not told in HG2. So, based on this, a ship with a 10,000-ton fuel tank that needed one plant which took approximately a week to refine its fuel (a long time admittedly; but a statement elsewhere in the book led one to believe that military ships could use unrefined fuel anyway) now would need 10 plants which do the job in an indeterminate amount of time. The problem is compounded by the percentage-based purification plant table in *Trillion Credit Squadron*, which is described as merely restating the table in HG2 in different terms, but which gives decidedly different values than the HIGH GUARD tables if both are followed exactly. The answer, provided by GDW's John Harshman, is that the TCS table is off by a factor of ten! A ship with a 50-ton plant designed with TCS actually needs a 500-ton plant!

There are some other questions I have with HIGH GUARD, 2nd Edition (why, for instance, the DM given the particle accelerator at short range was switched over to the meson gun, yet the particle accelerator still was listed as being most effective at close range in the text). But before anyone gets the wrong impression, let me go on to say that the *improvements* in the new edition far outweigh the faults.

The construction process has become much simpler and more realistic. One great improvement is the grouping of all the important tables (with the exception of some grouped on page 36) on the middle four pages of the book. Not only does this

make the tables more accessible than those spread throughout the book in the 1st edition, but you can even pull them out for easy reference. Drives and power plants generally cost less now; there are lesser jumps in tonnage code for ship hulls (size jumps from 50,000 tons to 75,000 rather than 100,000 as in the 1st edition). Particle accelerators are now included on the turret weapons table, along with the new barbettes. Streamlining is now available – at least partially – for all ship configurations except dispersed structures and planetoids. Computer models are now available up to model 9, though bis models are limited to models 1 and 2. Armor is handled in a much more realistic fashion. Cost and weight are based on a percentage of the ship's overall tonnage rather than on straight figures. It can also be applied to more ship configurations.

Perhaps one of the more useful improvements is the ability to design your own small craft. In *High Guard 1*, all possible ship's boats (fuel shuttles, life boats, fighters, etc.) were standardized. Now you can design your own small craft just as you design your starships. If you want fighters that can serve unusual functions, all you have to do is design them. If you want gunboats, you can create them. If you want transport shuttles, draw them up. (This section should eliminate some of the comments I've heard regarding the uselessness of *Traveller* fighters, based on those in HG1.)

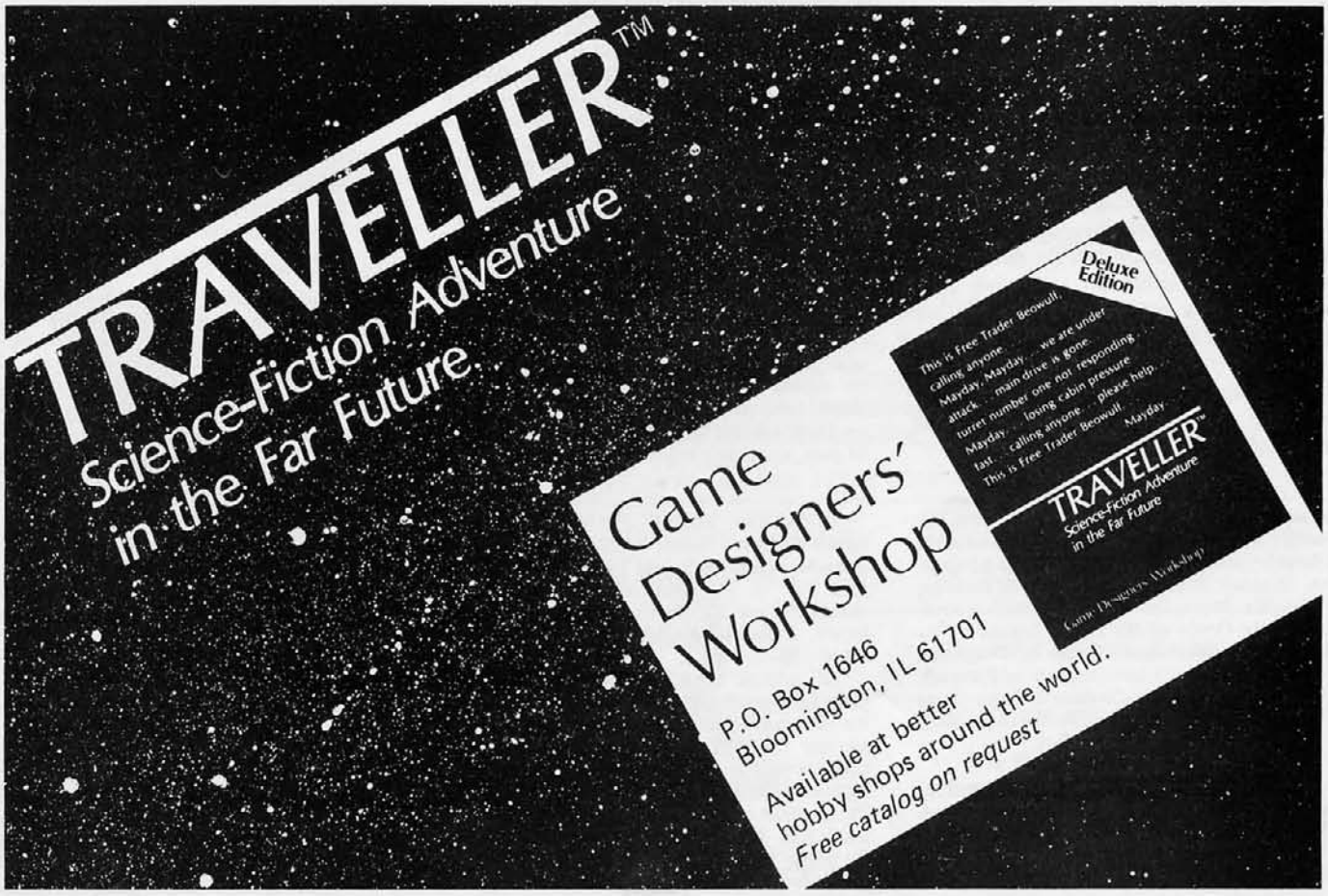
Combat has been greatly expanded. The turn sequence has become somewhat more complex. Whereas the 1st edition had only four steps to combat, the 2nd includes nine. The ship allocation and combat steps have been combined into one combat step and individual battle formation, precombat decision, damage, breakthrough, pursuit and terminal (boarding, damage control, etc.) steps have been added. The really new step is the pursuit step in which ships breaking off may not automatically escape; the enemy has a chance to catch such ships, provided he has vessels whose agility matches or exceeds those escaping.

Combat is a lot different now, too. Instead of ships "squaring off" and fighting one on one, each ship in a fleet is put forward (attacker exposing himself first) and *any* batteries on *any* ships in the enemy's fleet may fire on the ship put forward (though all batteries may only be fired once, offensively or defensively, in a turn).

The section of the combat system that governs hit determination has been greatly streamlined, making this phase of battle much easier to deal with. The attack tables are all contained on three pages. All beam weapons – lasers and energy weapons – have been combined on one table. Several tables have been dropped totally. All weapons now have a to-hit table, based on weapon factor. After that is determined, they must roll on the penetration tables to see if they have gotten through the active and passive defenses.

Particle accelerators are more deadly now, needing only to roll for a hit. And the damage tables give greater possibilities for damage, more critical hits, etc. They also allow for the possibility that a hit will have no effect. The old miscellaneous effects table has been incorporated into the regular and critical hits tables, dropping that rather nebulous effect, "streamlining shattered." The modifiers for the damage table are different now. Another deadly addition is that spinal mount weapons get extra damage rolls depending on their code, and any battery with a factor greater than the size code of the ship it hits inflicts automatic critical hits equal to the difference (a good way to discourage piranha tactics). The black globe rules are now more rational and complete.

While HIGH GUARD 2nd Edition still has several faults that GDW should address in the future, it is far superior to the 1st edition in almost every way. I'd advise all you fleet commanders to pick up a copy if you haven't already. But do hang on to your 1st editions for ship's vehicles, etc. You'll be glad you did.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Games for which reviews have been received or assigned include: *Adventure Class Ships, Adventure in Time, Catacombs of the Bear Cult, Character Role Playing, The Corsairs of Cythera, Dungeon Floors, Empire I: World Builders, Federation Space, Interstellar Skirmishes, Journey to the Center of the Circle, Legend of the Sky Raiders, Marinagua, Portals of Irontooth, Power Play, Seldon's Compendium of Starcraft, Simba Safari, Southern Command, Space Opera 2nd. Ed., The Sultan's Pearl, Tarlkin's Landing,* and *Uragyad'n of the Seven Pillars.*

Games for which we are currently seeking reviewers include: *Empire of the Overmind, Grand Master,* and *Space Ace 21.*

DOWN WITH THE KING (Avalon Hill); $12.00. Designed by Glenn and Kenneth Rahman. 32-page 8½" x 11" rules booklet, 450 cards, record sheet pad, and 2 dice, boxed. 2-6 players; playing time about three hours. Published 1981.

DOWN WITH THE KING is a fantasy political game, set in the hypothetical kingdom of Fandonia under the benign rule of King George whom everyone wants to overthrow. Each player takes the role of a Fandonian noble. The object is to build a powerful political faction and eventually place a member of the royal family, loyal only to you, on the throne.

DOWN WITH THE KING gives the players a wider variety of activities to choose from than other political games. There is constant player interaction. Players can go from rags to riches and back again several times in the game. The winner will never be certain until the game is over. Dueling, assassination, scandal, wrongdoing, hiding, travelling, romance, marriage, extradition, interrogation, trial, banishment, imprisonment, execution, death, civil crisis, and usurpation are a few of the things that can happen during a game of DOWN WITH THE KING.

DOWN WITH THE KING can be somewhat confusing the first few times it is played. Players should be advised that things will go quite slowly until they are very familiar with the game.

DOWN WITH THE KING is a pleasant change of pace, and a very enjoyable group game.

–Paul Manz

INVASION: EARTH (GDW); $11.98. Designed by Marc Miller, Frank Chadwick, and John M. Astell. 8½" x 11" 14-page rule book, four 8½" x 11" chart sheets, two counter sheets, 17" x 22" full-color map, two dice, boxed. 2 players; playing time 4+ hours. Published 1981.

INVASION: EARTH, GDW's newest board game for *Traveller* and the first to be released in the new bookshelf box, is here at last. And it appears the wait was worth it. INVASION: EARTH continues GDW's tradition of well-conceived, playable SF games. Centered around the Imperial invasion of Terra during the Solomani Rim Wars of the *Traveller* universe, INVASION: EARTH utilizes – and builds upon – the basic game of *Fifth Frontier War* and is almost completely compatible with that game. IE uses the same space combat systems with only minor differences. However, INVASION: EARTH greatly expands surface combat, taking into consideration factors of movement across a planetary surface; gives special rules including weather effects, supply, planetary defense bases, hidden and mock SSBs; and shows more detailed problems with landing troops on enemy territory. System defense boats are now represented by actual counters rather than abstractly. Instead of the fleet composition charts of FFW, IE features troop display charts.

INVASION: EARTH is designed to serve not only as a game about a Terran assault, but also as an example of how such action can be applied to any world under attack. Those who are sticklers for even greater complexity and detail could easily integrate the IE system into FFW to replace the more abstract ground rules in that game. Yet, overall, INVASION: EARTH is a much easier game to learn and play. In fact, those who have not yet played either game or who found FFW a bit too involved would be well-advised to play IE first as an introductory game to FFW.

There are a few problems in IE, however. While the rules allow for the set-up of an Imperial advanced base on the moon, the Solomani apparently – at least according to the rules – cannot garrison Luna at all to prevent such an Imperial tactic. This seems rather unrealistic and unlikely to me. I'd allow at least a Terran planetary defense base on the moon to give the Imperials a rougher time of it (but then, maybe that's my Terran chauvinism). There seem to be a few ambiguities in the SSB rules, though these aren't serious. The victory conditions, while a bit unsatisfactory, are workable.

Overall, for its merits as a two-player SF board game and for its direct applications to *Traveller* role-playing, I can recommend INVASION: EARTH to all *Traveller* enthusiasts as well as all those who have enjoyed GDW's other fine SF games.

–William A. Barton

RESCUE FROM THE HIVE (SPI); $8. Designed by Nick Karp. Boxed, with 11" x 17" map, 100 counters, 8-page rulebook, 2-page solitaire variant, and one die. 2 players (one with solitaire variant); playing time 1-2 hours. Published 1981.

Ambassador Helstrom(!) and his daughter Athena have been taken hostage by radical Znons. (Znons are "humanoid aliens with insectile communal instincts and values.") Earth decides that a show of force is in order, and a squad of darters, full of space marines, is dispatched to attempt a RESCUE FROM THE HIVE. The hive is a Znon ship, complete with hyperdrive, lasers, hatcheries, and command posts for six queens.

RESCUE FROM THE HIVE has accomplished one difficult goal: opposing forces, with greatly differing abilities, advantages, and drawbacks, have been drawn up into roughly equal balance. The Terrans have the usual characteristics of space marines everywhere, including in their number engineers and scouts. The Znons, in addition to your standard workers and soldiers, have queens, which improve Znon movement and combat, control Terran minds, and reinforce each other's command abilities. They also have boobytraps. The rules system in RFTH is relatively simple, but SPI doesn't make the mistake they have made on other occasions, and assume that a simple system means no loopholes. They have taken care to remove every loophole, expanding 4 pages of rules into

8. The extra reading is worthwhile. I was especially pleased by the explicitly worded definition of terms – it answered difficult questions several times. The solitaire scenario is more than a brief addendum. It seems to play as well as the basic game, its best point being the list of ordered strategies, depending on the situation, for the non-player Znon. Components and graphics, while not outstanding, are up to SPI's standards.

The negative points I found indicate that final changes on RFTH were being made as it was rushed into production; some rules just don't mesh well. Znons (as well as Terrans) may be incapacitated, rather than killed, but an incapacitated Znon has next to no worth; why is the distinction made? The first turn of the game gives the Znons a free laser barrage at all incoming darters. This has a chance of knocking out anywhere from 0 to 75% of Terran strength. Play balance is fairly good, but why bother with balance if the first move in the game is an attempt to upset that balance with a series of mindless die rolls? Granted, 75% mortality is pretty unlikely, but the range of likely losses runs pretty evenly between 0 and 30%; the game could well be won or lost before a bit of strategy unfolds. This may reflect "reality," but it's not very satisfying to the gamer who just invested $8 in having a good time.

SPI continues to produce an attractive, playable game every other month, in *Ares*. None of these games is likely to set the world on fire, or even produce lasting interest, but so far, they tend to be consistent diversions. RFTH is another from that mold. On the other hand (and I offer my apologies to Nick Karp if I'm wrong), I get the impression that no one had his heart in this game. SPI has committed itself to cranking out an SF/fantasy game every two months, whether it has one ready or not. Having said this last, let me repeat that, for the most part, they have succeeded with RFTH. If you enjoy the premise, you'll probably enjoy the game.

–David Ladyman

SUPPLEMENTS

ALIEN BASE (FGU); $5.00. Designed by Larry Smith. 8½" x 11" 29-page book. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

ALIEN BASE is FGU's second published adventure for *Space Opera* and is a vast improvement over the first SO adventure, *Martigan Belt*. Whereas *Martigan* was more of an outline for an adventure, leaving out large blocks of vital information, ALIEN BASE is far more complete, with almost everything the Starmaster will need to run what could prove an exciting scenario. The basic premise of the adventure is a search by the player-characters for the missing survey ship *Timothy*, which takes them to the barely surveyed planet Thonne. Here they learn that the natives have been invaded by alien "Slavers" who now seem to have sinister plans for the human race. The players must find and penetrate the secrets of the alien base of the npurth slavers as they attempt to locate the missing crew of the *Timothy*. The adventure includes plans for the base, planetary map and descriptions, new animals, three new alien races, plans for a subterranean "submarine" for sailing the dust seas of Thonne, and NPC stats, which introduce the concept of psionic "inertials" (anti-psionic powers).

ALIEN BASE is notable for its overall completeness. It presents an interesting situation and carries it through for the players without leaving vital answers for the poor Starmaster to have to puzzle out himself. It also includes a point system to tell players how well they did in the adventure after completion. Plus the adventure allows opportunities for players to both shoot *and* think their way out of various situations.

Unfortunately, some things were overlooked in the adventure: The location of the important alien NPC Chembles in the base is not given. The chance for routine robot encounters is overlooked, too. Two animals are listed as "described elsewhere" in the animal section, but the only other place they're mentioned refers the reader to the animal section for a full description. Fuller stats could have been given for the Thonne and none except Chembles' description were given for the pnarm. And the maps symbols and text description don't tally in places.

Most of these omissions, however, can be easily glossed over by the SM, leaving ALIEN BASE a relatively complete and satisfying adventure for SO, either as a stand-alone scenario or as the first in a planned series. If you enjoy *Space Opera*, I recommend ALIEN BASE.

–William A. Barton

THE BURGUNDY PIT (Wilmark Dynasty, 501 Durso Dr., Newark, DE 19711); $5. Designed by John M. Corradin. 18-page FRP supplement. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

The reduced typewriter script is quite legible and reasonably attractive at about 80 characters per line. There is little artwork, and that purely amateur. The maps are drawn freehand, without the benefit of a straightedge, on unlined paper. Because there is no square grid to give a distance scale, nor even a one-line measure such as those on geographer's maps, the reader/GM must refer to room descriptions for size, and for distances between rooms or from points in separate rooms he is lost. Moreover, most of the room descriptions don't state the size! This is inexcusable, and alone is enough to put off some GMs.

The introductory documentation is extremely poor. A few lines state that an illusionist has discovered the whereabouts of an old enemy, and has hired the party to regain a magic item. But no description of the outside or location of the dungeon is given, nor is there any indication of where the party starts; the GM is not even told that the dungeon begins at the bottom (fifth) level and rises to the first and toughest level. (I deduced this from the descriptions, with the assistance of a friend who playtested the scenario at Origins '80.) Not only is there no scale, the maps are not all printed in the same orientation, and stairs apparently turn 90 degrees and change width between levels.

The treasure is extremely rich, though there are few magic items in non-player hands. The adventure itself is mostly a matter of hacking, though a party such as the one provided is going to get into trouble if it fights too much. I've seen worse scenarios in magazines. Four pages of descriptions of a party of ten characters (average under sixth level) are provided. The personalities are interesting and probably the best aspect of the module.

Wilmark didn't respond to two queries about retail prices; the $5 tag is my recollection of prices at Wilmark's booth at GenCon East, confirmed by a wholesale price of $2.70 for small quantities. The module is grossly overpriced. There is not much here, nor is the semi-professional nature of the production an excuse for astronomical price.

–Lewis Pulsipher

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GRIFFIN MOUNTAIN (Chaosium); $16. Designed by Rudy Kraft, Paul Jaquays & Greg Stafford. Campaign for *RuneQuest.* Softcover book (202 pages), with pull-out map (20" x 30"). Published 1981.

GRIFFIN MOUNTAIN is a complete fantasy campaign, set in the primitive land of Balazar, to the northeast of Dragon Pass in the *RuneQuest* world of Glorantha. The book covers the historical and social background of the area, and describes the current political relationships. Also included are two cults, three citadels, encounters, rumors, caravans, points of interest, and dozens of non-player characters (NPCs). An NPC record sheet is provided to help record and develop their personalities. Several sections add new rules to the RQ system (river crossings, for example), and there are the obligatory new monsters.

A lot of work went into this volume, as is apparent not only from the high physical quality but from the detail and interdependency of the scenarios. Traps are believable; treasures are unusual and imaginative. Complete statistics are given for any creature which might be encountered, as well as a brief character sketch for each important intelligent being. There are many scenario ideas, and enough background that you can easily come up with your own. There's adventure appropriate for either beginning or experienced characters. Despite the detail, there's still plenty left open for the referee who wants to improvise. This truly is a campaign – you could probably run GRIFFIN MOUNTAIN for at least a year.

Unfortunately, GRIFFIN MOUNTAIN is not self-contained. You'll need *Cults of Prax* and probably *Plunder* to run it, in addition to the RQ rules. There are some inconsistencies with this material, since Balazar isn't Prax. Though the material is organized and indexed, there is so much that it is sometimes difficult to find a particular piece of information, which may be spread out among several chapters.

GRIFFIN MOUNTAIN represents the state of the art in published scenarios. It's more than a soulless listing of characteristics or a collection of disjointed encounters. I highly recommend it to all *RuneQuest* referees, and to anyone who wants an example of how a campaign should be set up.

–David Dunham

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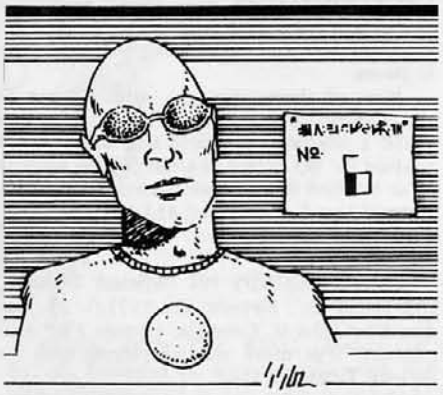

HAZARD, IPSP/ISIS OFFICIAL MAP 7 (Judges Guild); $2.00. Designed by Robert Bingham. Approved for *Superhero 2044.* One 22" x 34" map, backprinted with text. Published 1981.

HAZARD is Judges Guild's foray into supplements approved for use with Gamescience's *Superhero 2044* role-playing game. It is a map of the Pacific area around *Superhero 2044*'s Inguria Island, from China and Japan in the north, the Indonesian islands in the west, the southwest coast of North America and a new "subcontinent" in the east to Australia in the south, showing various hazards, such as politically unstable and hostile areas, radioactive zones, and "unknowns." One whole side (minus the cover illustration) consists of a two-color hex map of the area. The reverse side is text covering descriptions of the area, the dangerous mutant animals of Australia, the various local organizations that may aid superheroes, and a new supervillain called "Uno," whose section may be used to start a *Superhero 2044* campaign.

HAZARD is useful in that it provides a much fuller, more comprehensive campaign arena for *Superhero 2044.* The map shows problem areas, obstacles, and hazards to throw in the way of the up and coming superhero, providing a wealth of ideas for a GM. Among the more interesting entries are those meant for the mutant Australian animals, particularly the dangerous rockbunnies (eat through solid stone with their acid saliva), and the dread "land piranhas" (mutated killer wallabies). Since no specific stats are included, HAZARD could easily be adapted to any of the other superhero role-playing games – *Villains & Vigilantes, Champions,* etc. – as a campaign background.

The map is rather bland in pale blue and yellow; the yellow-marked politically unstable areas are very difficult to see under most lighting conditions. The text is a bit shaky in places, too. At one point it seems to jump from a description of Australia to that of the newly risen Pacific continent with no transition at all, making it difficult (until further on) to determine what is being described. The text seems to give two completely different descriptions of two unknown hazard areas over mid-ocean. There are also the usual JG typos and misspellings.

Overall, though, those of you who haven't given up on *Superhero 2044* for other, more playable, superhero role-playing systems will find much of interest and use in HAZARD.

–William A. Barton

LOMODO IVA (Group One); $6.95. *Traveller* supplement. One 8½" x 11" 18-page booklet, 17" x 22" color map, bagged. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

LOMODO IVA is another in Group One's series of planetary "adventures" set in their upcoming Theta Borealis sector. As with most of Group One's recent efforts, the package is actually an adventure setting, with no scenarios provided, describing the planet Lomodo IVa. It includes a description of the planet, a world on which two intelligent races have died off, leaving the planet in the possession of a semi-intelligent jellyfish-like species, the Osp; its history; geography and meteorology; the dominant types of fauna; encounter tables for various terrains; and maps and keyed descriptions of a ruined city, a crumbling fortress, an underground tomb and the subterranean remains of a temple. As has become standard, a brightly-colored – almost garish – geodesic map of the planet accompanies the "scenario" book.

As usual, the most interesting aspect of LOMODO IVA seems to be the descriptions of the animals that may be encountered on the planet, accompanied by drawings of representative types. The beasts of Lomodo IVa seem to be a bit less bizarre than some in G1's past adventures, and could easily be borrowed for use on other planets if the ref is reluctant to use the nondescript ones found in *Animal Encounters.* Some points of the underground labyrinths are interesting, particularly those in the tomb which prove the most challenging of the whole book.

Unfortunately, all the typical G1 problems are repeated in LOMODO: the sloppy production, misspellings and errors, the omission of information that should have been included, etc. Particularly annoying is the table in the encounter section on geophysical encounters – not only are there no guidelines at all for its use (when, why, how), but it includes rows of puzzling DMs for various terrains with no explanation of to what they are to be applied! In other words, the table is completely useless. The descriptions of the animals in the encounter tables seem to contradict those in the text on several points, too. And, unlike some of G1's planetary settings, this one has almost nothing to suggest a reason for players to want to go adventuring on the planet, unless they just want to poke around in the ruins or hunt the animals.

All in all, LOMODO IVA, while having its points of interest, seems the least inspired of any of Group One's adventures thus far. If you haven't thought much of their past products, you'll really hate this one. Unless you're a collector of all *Traveller* items or are hard up for a place to adventure, pass this one by.

–William A. Barton

MAROONED ON GHOSTRING (Judges Guild); $5.98. Designed by Walter and Dorothy Bledsaw. *Traveller* supplement. One 8½" x 11" book, 22" x 34" map. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

MAROONED ON GHOSTRING is Judges Guild's latest adventure for *Traveller,* one taking

place in the yet-unreleased fourth sector of JG's Gateway Quadrant. The title is somewhat deceptive in that players are not marooned in the same sense as in GDW's *Marooned/Marooned Alone.* Characters will be marooned on Ghostring only until they can repair their spacecraft, damaged in misjump, and as long beyond that as they wish to stay on the planet gathering information to sell to the Imperial government – or the black market – on the previously uncharted intelligent life form of the planet. Much of the information in the scenario book covers the inhabitants of Ghostring – data on the three warring nations, maps and places of interest in the capital cities, military organizations, etc. – and of the planet itself, its flora and fauna and so on. The inhabitants, by the way, are called Hawklings and are – you guessed it – intelligent, flightless "humanoid" birds.

The data given on Ghostring is fairly detailed in most instances; specific city locations are described briefly, yet usually well enough to give a referee ideas for situations in which to place his players. The scenario book includes, along with the city map locations, a full-color planetary map; descriptions of certain notable animal forms and animal encounter tables for all terrain types; encounter tables for cities, military encounters, gangster (yes, gangsters!) encounters and others; an outline of the various military organizations; and travel times by the various modes of transportation. The separate mapsheet includes a large geodesic map showing terrain and naming nations and smaller ones showing terrain and political alignments.

Unfortunately, GHOSTRING has several flaws. Encounter information is often far too brief to be of use; particularly annoying is the military table which lists encounters with flame-thrower troops, bi-plane corps, and Naval groups as possibilities, yet provides the referee with no guidelines on how to administer such items. The travel time table is marred by the failure to list what terrain type each value refers to. The big map is unnecessary; its political alignment section, the only unique item above the map in the book, is ruined by a mistake; and the aliens are so anthropomorphized they should have been made human in the first place. No obvious alien could actually travel freely on a world at war.

While better conceived than the average Group One planetary adventure, MAROONED ON GHOSTRING falls short of past Guild efforts, though an enterprising ref might be able to make use of its basic situation with some careful modifications.

–William A. Barton

MASTERS OF MIND (Judges Guild); $7.98. Designed by Charles Wilson. Supplement for any role-playing game. 8½" x 11" 78-page rulebook. Published 1981.

In MASTERS OF MIND, characters roll for basic psychic abilities (e.g., telepathy), and use them to develop skills (e.g., illusion). Abilities and skills can be used outright, or in special mind-to-mind psionic combat. Psychic abilities can be an adjunct to magic or technology in any role-playing game, or the psionic characters can be a class unto themselves. The rules will work for almost any role-playing game, although the terminology is appropriate to D&D. This isn't surprising, as the system was obviously inspired by the D&D system.

MASTERS OF MIND is far better than its inspirational progenitor. There are extremely lucid descriptions of exactly how the powers operate; there's a sophisticated psionic combat system offering a believable "feel" of psionics as a unique force. That feel is markedly enhanced by inclusion of concepts from science fiction, notably Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Darkover,* and Zenna Henderson's *People* stories. Concepts such as group link-ups, psionic amplifiers, and sentient networks translate well into gaming. The designer has done his homework, creating an entertaining set of rules.

He hasn't escaped a problem common to attempts to use literary concepts in gaming. The game characters must start at the beginning of their "lives," relatively powerless, and either take years to acquire the interesting, useful powers, or acquire them too quickly and thus unbalance the game. Also, psionic combat is a lot more interesting to read about than to laboriously roll with dice. The system does work, it's just that the system deliberately distinguishes itself from the mechanics of whatever game you're playing and so requires a lot of extra dice rolling and page turning. However, the worst problem was the rulebook itself. Proofreading was nonexistent. Maybe the game should be judged on ideas, not typesetting, but with that many typos – from such an established, professional gaming company – I was seriously tempted to simply fling it away untested. ("Come back when you've got it right!")

If you can forgive the sloppy physical presentation, and want a coherent, intriguing set of rules for including psychic powers in a role-playing game, MASTERS OF MIND works, and works well. If you don't like the psionic rules you're using, or aren't using any, MASTERS OF MIND is definitely what you need.

–Ronald Pehr

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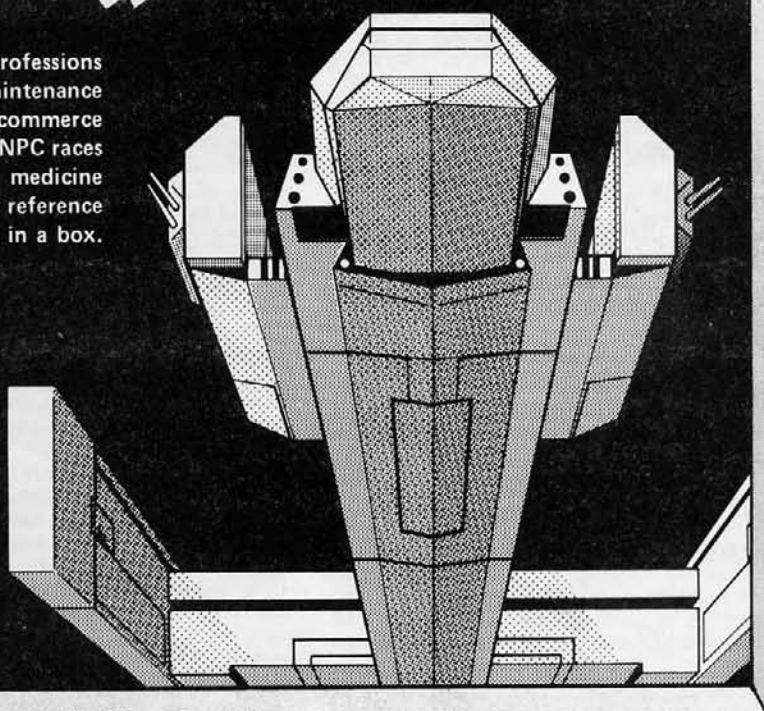

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PROBE NCG 8436 (FGU); $5.00. Designed by Stephen Kingsley. 8½" x 11" 21-page book. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

PROBE NCG 8436 concerns a survey mission to an uncharted system some 57 light-years from the Martigan system in the Procyon subsector, and thus can be played as an extension of *Martigan Belt.* Players are crew members or part of a survey team serving on the 20,000-ton cruiser *Outreach.* The mission of the *Outreach* is to bring back a full survey of NCG 8436 (tentatively designated Grinth), contacting and establishing relations with any sentient life forms that may be discovered. Other than that basic goal, the scenario is primarily designed as a setting for whatever actions the players wish to undertake. To that end, the adventure includes complete plans for the *Outreach,* character generation guidelines and some new equipment. There are also statistics for all eight planets in the Grinth system, encounter information for Grinth I and II, and stats and descriptions for the native Grinthi, an amphibious saurian race, including guidelines for generating Grinthi player-characters. A section of encyclopedic information and additional scenario ideas complete the book.

PROBE NCG 8436 features several outstanding ideas. The new equipment is rather useful, particularly the sensor probe and survival kits. The *Outreach* is an excellent addition to the SO line of starships. Most of the plants, animals, and events are well-drawn out, though a couple seem a bit too Terran to be alien creatures. The Grinthi and their religion are well-conceived, too.

There are few problems in PROBE NCG 8436. There are some minor typos, and the location of the Grinthi undersea city was left off the map. The main problem may be, as with many "setting" scenarios, that unless the players or the StarMaster devise more specific goals, play may tend to founder.

Overall, though, PROBE NCG 8436 has enough potential to provide some intriguing adventure sessions for *Space Opera* play. While not as exciting an adventure as the recent *Alien Base,* it is far superior to the earlier *Martigan Belt.*

—William A. Barton

ROGUE MOON OF SPINSTORM (Judges Guild); $5.98. Designed by Dave Sering. Approved for *Traveller.* One 8½" by 11" 32-page book. Seven players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

ROGUE MOON OF SPINSTORM is a follow-up to *Amycus Probe.* It takes the crew of the vessel *Hrunta* to the Spinstorm system in the Blackedge subsector of the yet-to-be-released Maranatha-Alkahest sector in search of the builders of the alien base discovered in *Amycus.* Players will face the navigational hazards of Spinstorm, a system consisting of a black hole and white dwarf circling a red giant star, with rocky planets and debris and two gas giants, and the defenses of more alien bases. Maps, encounter tables, pregenerated characters with equipment and ship stats, and referee and player information make up the basis of this supplement. A section on tournament use and scoring is also included.

The navigational hazards of the Spinstorm system are promising, though not as much was done with them as could have been. The idea of listing performance information (range, speeds, damage) for the various items of equipment and weaponry is admirable and quite helpful (especially with the nonstandard items used). And the installations presented here should prove more challenging to players than that of *Amycus Probe.*

There are several problems with SPINSTORM, however. Much of the information is repeated from the first adventure—eight whole pages, plus half of two others! Yet the two surface maps of the installations, which the ref is instructed to show the players when they get close enough, were left out altogether! Information on the system given at the beginning is repeated verbatim later in the book, and the table for describing useless alien junk seems to be the same as in the earlier *Dra'k'ne Station.* One item repeated from *Amycus Probe* is the Type A Security Robot—which doesn't even appear in this adventure! This shows poor planning on JG's part, as does placing the maps of the moons on the backs of two of the player-character sheets. If the idea was to make this a stand-alone adventure, more should have been repeated (such as the deck plans of the *Hrunta*); as part of a series, duplications should have been omitted in favor of new material or a lower-priced adventure.

Overall, if you have *Amycus Probe*, you'll probably want to go with this one, too. As a stand-alone, ROGUE MOON OF SPINSTORM is too much in the mold of past "investigate alien installation" scenarios to be worth most refs' time and money.

—William A. Barton

SALVAGE MISSION (Marischal Adventures); $2.00. Designed by J. Andrew Keith. Approved for *Traveller.* One 8½" x 11" 4-page folio. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

SALVAGE MISSION is the third of Marischal's folio adventures. This adventure differs from its companions in that it is less concerned with combat than with searching and possible diplomatic complications. It concerns the hunt for a disabled transport carrying an Imperial payroll of 275,000,000 credits, lost when a Zhodani attack forced it to make a jump to the planet Winston in the neutral Darrian Confederation. The transport, the *Pax,* never reported in again and the close escort *Stag* is sent in search of the payroll. The adventure includes a description of the *Stag,* of the Winston system, the background of the mission, encounter table, and a rundown of the diplomatic situation in the area.

Though SALVAGE MISSION lacks the excitement of the chase found in *Flight of the Stag* and *Fleetwatch,* it contains some interesting possibilities for diplomatic intrigue, especially between the players, the Winston port authority, the Darrian Confederation and the nearby Sword Worlds. The course of this adventure is more open-ended than that of its companions, and the players' actions can have a very real effect on the outcome of the war in this area.

SALVAGE MISSION, being more a set of guidelines for adventure than its companions, puts more responsibility on the referee to make it work. It seems less suitable than the others for a single one-time scenario and should probably be used in conjunction with at least one of the other adventures in a campaign setting. A couple of typos have crept in, too, and I have a few questions about the availability of refueling and resupplying the *Stag* at the Type E starport on Winston, but these are minor considerations. I might have liked more info on the *Pax,* but again, such isn't actually necessary within the confines of the adventure.

Overall, SALVAGE MISSION is a worthy companion to the other Marischal adventures. I look forward to more adventures in this series.

—William A. Barton

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SAPIES (Group One); $6.95. Designed by Dorothy Bledsaw. *Traveller* supplement. One 8½" x 11" book, 17" x 22" map, bagged. 2 or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

SAPIES may be considered a landmark in Group One's series of adventure settings on alien planets in the Theta Borealis sector, in that it is the first that actually names a designer. Other than that, it is routine Group One – less in fact, in that it simply rehashes old ideas on a different planet. Sapies is a medium-high tech level world with two warring species, the nomad barbarian cygmo tribe and the advanced mitzene race. Both races are described and illustrated, as are several species of animals on the planet, the flora and terrain, two mitzene cities and the barbarian stronghold – a labyrinthine cave complex. And, of course, there are encounter tables for each terrain type and a full-color geodesic map, perhaps the most garish yet – a plethora of pinks and dark oranges. Don't stare at this one too long!

While SAPIES has little to recommend it above previous G1 offerings, one might find the markings of an interesting situation in a commando-type raid on the barbarian stronghold or perhaps one of the mitzene cities (the latter are apparently supposed to be the "good guys" of the planet, but they are so grotesque in comparison to the cygmos, I find it hard to sympathize with them at all). A couple of the animals are interesting, if slightly unlikely, too.

SAPIES seems to have even more flaws than usual with a G1 adventure: In one place a false start to a paragraph was left in the text and the paragraph begun anew two lines further on! Too many improbabilities around here, too, not adequately explained: The pink photosynthesizing vegetation, the two-pupiled eyes of the mitzene, the suggestion that the mitzene evolved from the chiropteran class of animals in one place and the "clue" of the wrecked colony ship in the paragraph on their race and origins, the concept that animals from the same class (lidotodragon) can look like four-winged lobsters and pseudo ankylosauri, depending on whether they fly or walk, the use of sand-casters in a defense turret on the planet, the presence of the Nevlin's Cone in the barbarian stronghold. And, of course, the barbarians vs. the more civilized race is just a repeat of the idea used in *Warbor-Parn.*

Unless you're just completely knocked out by G1's adventure settings and have to have every one published, you can easily find much better than SAPIES even among G1's own products.

–William A. Barton

SOURCEBOOK 2 (FGU); $6.50. Designed by Edward E. Simbalist, Wes Ives, and Phil McGregor. Supplement for *Chivalry & Sorcery.* One 8½" x 11" 51-page book. Published 1981.

What you see is what you get: two columns of small print per page, texts and charts for resolving different contingencies in C&S. Some of this can be applied to other games. You want to know how to break down the 91 varieties of castle door? SOURCEBOOK 2 will tell you. What does it cost for a base-model vorpal blade? SOURCEBOOK 2 has the answer. There are instructions on prices and availability for magical artifacts, how to run a peasant revolt, and how to work out large battles on land or sea.

That last is an expansion of the system in the C&S supplement *Swords & Sorcerers.* It is especially welcome, as the C&S mass battle system is unwieldy. SOURCEBOOK 2 allows easy resolution of "off-stage" battles. All sections of SOURCEBOOK 2 allow the referee to fairly and carefully determine if players can pick a lock, smash a door, obtain a magical weapon, send a message, etc. Players derive a realistic simulation of the medieval fantasy by being given clear descriptions of exactly what the lock on the door looks like, or what they'll have to do to build a crystal of power. It's a terrific enhancement to role-playing.

SOURCEBOOK 2 has the same problem as other C&S game material. There is an embarassment of riches; *nobody* is going to use all this data, no matter how detailed his campaign. Some material requires too much dice-rolling and chart-using for the information gained (e.g., "Determining Spells for Non-Player Magick Users" takes 6 pages). Some material is simply presented without introduction or explanation.

Any dissatisfaction with SOURCEBOOK 2 is a mere quibble. If you play C&S, SOURCEBOOK 2 will markedly enhance your game. If you don't, it has limited utility.

–Ronald Pehr

THETA BOREALIS SECTOR (Group One); $6.95. Approved for *Traveller.* One 8½" by 11" 16-page book, 17" by 22" sector map, bagged. Published 1981.

THETA BOREALIS SECTOR is Group One's newest approved-for-*Traveller* release. It outlines the various worlds and subsectors that make up the Group One *Traveller* universe, much along the lines of GDW's own *Spinward Marches,* Paranoia Press' *Beyond* and *Vanguard Reaches* and Judges Guild's Gateway Quadrant releases. THETA BOREALIS ties many of G1's previous supplements together, showing the locations of those planets in their adventures–Pen-Latol's World, Port Xanatath, Wabor-Parn–and the mysterious Phoenix, Corelian and Ventura "Quadrants." In addition to the sector map and the individual world stats listed by subsector, the supplement includes two pages of library data concerning the dominant race, empires and confederations, and shipping lines, a page of encounter tables keyed to individual subsectors, and a two-page alphabetical planetary index.

The overall look of THETA BOREALIS SECTOR is far superior to past G1 efforts. Gone is the garish, often nearly unreadable covers of the adventures; TBS displays a standard *Traveller* black-and-red cover, quite subdued and quite sufficient. The ragged-edged look of the text has been replaced by an even right margin–a great graphic improvement. The sector map, too, is a plain red-and-white on black *functional* map, similar to the Paranoia sector maps and GDW's Spinward Marches map (though not as elaborate)–much nicer to look at than past planetary maps. Even more important, though there are things I might have liked to have seen included that weren't, nothing *vital* to this supplement is missing–a fault that has plagued G1's efforts from the beginning.

I'd have liked to have found more information about the history and developments–the *eccentricities*–of the THETA BOREALIS SECTOR, something in the line of what was found in Paranoia Press' sector supplements; the library data here is a bit slim. The book looks a bit bare in other places, too. Some of the world names are a bit whimsical–Pepperland, Pakwolf, etc.–but then that's almost unavoidable when naming some 382 worlds. And, of course, the price is still higher than

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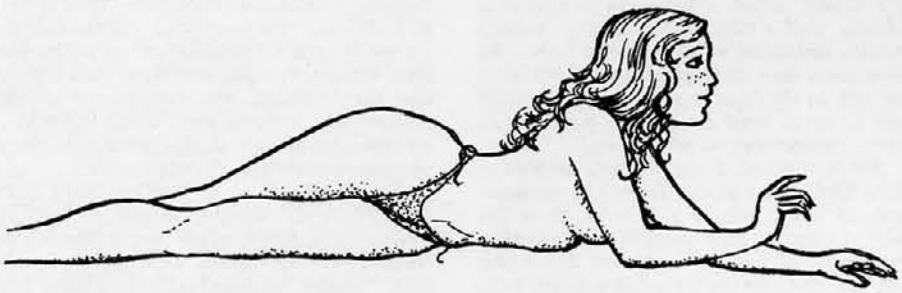

other companies' sector supplements, though the map compensates a bit here.

While there's no great reason for most players to leave the sector in which they're currently adventuring for THETA BOREALIS SECTOR (no more than there was for *Ley Sector* or *Vanguard Reaches* for that matter), the product is well-suited for those who'd prefer some distance between themselves and the Imperium. And it does show that Group One is working to improve its products.

–William A. Barton

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FANTASY SQUARES GRID SHEETS AND MAPERS [*sic*] AID TEMPLATE (Harry's House, 101 W. 61st St., Westmont, IL 60559); $4 (separately, $1.25 for grid, $3 for template). Five 22" x 16½" sheets of ¼" squares, 72 x 64 plus symbol key and additional 16 x 64, printed one side, template, bagged. Manufactured 1981.

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The principle expense of this package is the "Mapper's Aid" template. It is a sheet of hard but flexible plastic, 5" x 3¾", cut with holes which enable one to accurately and quickly draw a variety of symbols with a *very* fine point pen or pencil. Symbols include 3 squares (¼", 3/16", 1/8"), 2 rectangles, 4 circles, 2 hexagons, 2 five-pointed stars, 3 arrows, 2 asterisks, foliage, "C," "S," 3 dots, a dashed line, 3 cones (mountain symbols), wave symbols – all of these roughly 1/8" to ¼" – huts/buildings pattern, and directional compass with gothic letters for 4 cardinal points (3¼" overall). One side is marked with 10s of feet (¼" = 10 feet), the other long side with grooves for forming various squiggles. There are no triangles on the template.

Unless you intend to show off your maps as works of art, I don't see the need for this precision. Almost anyone can draw a perfectly adequate circle, star, whatever quicker than he can use a template to help him draw one. The direction cross is particularly useless except for show. For maps-as-"art" the template would be quite valuable.

The heading of this review describes the graph paper. I can add that it is printed in brown ink on creamy heavy paper which the manufacturer calls "Parchment Paper." It's hard to buy larger-than-letter-size graph paper in stores, but you get as many squares on a letter-size sheet with 8 squares per inch as you do on these 4/inch large sheets. I've always found, and D&D for example recommends, that 6 squares to an inch is best for DM mapping, and 8 squares to an inch is best for players. 4 squares is good for "art" maps, but 5 or 6 is more practical.

–Lewis Pulsipher

IISS SHIP FILES (Games Workshop); $5.98. Designed by Bob McWilliams. Approved for *Traveller*. One 6" x 8" 40-page booklet. Published 1981.

IISS SHIP FILES is a book of deck plans for six new ship types, written up as though taken from the files of the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service. In addition to four Imperial ship designs, two civilian and two military, the book is notable for including deck plans for a Zhodani and Vargr vessel as well. Ships featured in the FILES are the Freight Tractor Vessel *Heyan Rose*, the *Excalibur*-class Express Packet Boat (actually a starship), the Zhodani Navy *Tiaflfliet*-class Patrol Frigate, the Imperial Standard Automated Interdiction Satellite, the *Iylvir*-class Imperial Navy Light Assault Troop Carrier and the Hnneshant-type Vargr Tradeboat (also a starship). Complete deck plans, statistics, comments, crew roster, and *High Guard* USP are provided for each ship, along with an illustration and any special referee notes needed. An introductory section showing how to read the symbols of the deck plans completes the package.

There are several nice features in the IISS SHIP FILES, not the least of which is the variety of the ships themselves. The Hnneshant trading vessel is the first set of Vargr deck plans anywhere, and the only other Zhodani plans are those of FASA. The assault carrier adds a new dimension to mercenary operations, being capable of transporting troops as well as AFVs. And the interdiction satellite should prove quite useful to any referee whose players like to visit red zones repeatedly. The plans themselves are especially useful – even more than GDW's own – in that they show the locations of consoles and control chairs.

The problems in IISS SHIP FILES are minor. The tech level of the *Tiaflfliet* has been omitted from the USP. The *Iylvir* plans and drawing don't quite seem to match its designated configuration. Some of the control chairs and console lines are faded and difficult to see. The British spellings may seem a bit odd to American gamers. Also the role of the psionic adept aboard the Zhodani frigate has been left undefined, unlike that of the later *Shiva*-class patrol frigates of *Leviathan*. The price might seem a little steep to some for a supplement, but as this is an imported item, extra cost can't really be avoided – and the quality of the book makes it worth the extra cost, too.

IISS SHIP FILES is a strong first offering from Games Workshop's *Traveller* folks.

–William A. Barton

PERSONAL BASE LOADS (Timeline); $7.95. Play aid for *The Morrow Project*. 66 8½" x 11" sheets, 3-hole punched, in envelope. Published 1981.

PERSONAL BASE LOADS contains three sheets each of the 22 basic issues of equipment, weapons, and ammunition that player characters may receive as part of a Morrow team. Each sheet outlines the content of the standard issue basic load that all characters receive, plus one of the special weapons loads or, in some cases, the special issues such as a medical issue. On the reverse of each sheet is the player's individual data file, giving room for the character's attributes, maximum weight he can carry, the breakdown for his structure points, and other information.

Having the data file on the back of the basic loads is quite convenient. A row of stars shows exactly how much ammo each weapon (and how many shots of antitoxin, stimulant, etc. for a medkit) has before it must be reloaded. The weight of each load is also listed, enabling the player to see at a glance just how much of a load the character is carrying and whether or not he is encumbered.

The only problem I can see with the personal basic load sheets is that, with the reduced type on these revised sheets, the type might be a bit hard to read. If a character has a lot of personal history, the player may have to use a separate sheet to record it all, since the backs of the data sheets are taken up with the loads.

A set of PERSONAL BASIC LOADS is a must for a Morrow GM if he wants to run his campaign in the most orderly method possible.

–William A. Barton

PERSONAL DATA FILES (Games Workshop); $5.50. Approved for *Traveller*. One pad of 50 8¼" x 11¾" sheets. Published 1981.

For those *Travellers* who sometimes have trouble keeping track of all their skills or exactly what equipment they have, Games Workshop has entered the field of *Traveller* data sheets with its PERSONAL DATA FILES. These come in a pad of 50 sheets (more than enough for most players), each printed with

spaces for personal data, skills, funds, psionics, service history, equipment, optional combat factors and notes.

The PERSONAL DATA FILES are nicely drawn and set up in an easy-to-use fashion. Each section is comprehensively divided into items that are either necessary for play or that help flesh out a character. The personal data section, in addition to player and character names and UPP, has spaces for referee name, title, birthdate, homeworld, race/sex, age and Travellers' Aid membership. While lacking some of the specifics of Paranoia Press' personal data sheets (religion, marital status, etc.), it nevertheless covers most items that will come up in a campaign. The equipment section includes a space to note where each item is located and includes room for DMs and character reductions due to encumbrance. The service history includes room for the character's *Mercenary* morale rating, and the optional combat section is for recording *Snapshot* action points and *Azhanti High Lightning* factor. Nice. And, of course, 50 sheets to a pad is more than with any other data sheets available.

Problems include the nonstandard size of the sheets. They're nowhere near as easy to store as the Paranoia or GDW's own PDSs or even the regulation 8½" x 11" sheets in Judges Guild's *Traveller Logbook*. The space for notes is awfully small, but the back is blank, so it can be used, too.

Overall, if you can locate this import item, you should find it quite useful.

– William A. Barton

UNIVERSE GAMEMASTER'S SCREEN & SYSTEM, WORLD AND ENVIRON LOGS (SPI); $8.00. Four 8½" x 11" section screen, 8½" x 11" 96-page logbook. Published 1981.

SPI has released its first *Universe* game accessory, a gamemaster's package containing the official UNIVERSE GAMEMASTER'S SCREEN and a book of SYSTEM, WORLD AND ENVIRON LOGS. The 96-page logbook contains four system logs for mapping the worlds of a particular star system, 112 world logs (divided among the various world sizes of the *Universe* system) and 12 environ logs for detailed mapping of specific areas on a planet. The four-sectioned screen folds out to hide the GM's notes, rolls, etc., from the players. On the GM's side, it displays the charts, tables, and text the designers felt most useful for refereeing *Universe*; on the player's side, two sections contain charts for their use. Charts are colored to differentiate one from another.

The GAMEMASTER'S SCREEN could prove useful as it will save GMs at least some time they'd have to spend flipping through the rules. The logs will alleviate somewhat the necessity of photocopying those provided with the game.

Unfortunately, since *Universe* has been out for several months, most GMs will already have copied most logs they're going to need, making those in this package superfluous. And with only four system logs and 12 environ logs (barely enough to map some single planets), they're going to have to be copied anyway. That greatly reduces the cost-effectiveness of the package. Since the screen still requires reference to the rules in places (particularly on the skill summaries), some GMs may wish to use something else as a screen and forego the $8 altogether. One more big gripe I have about the screen is one most GM screens seem to share: Some charts that appear on the player side are absent from the GM's side (such as the Hit Table), yet are just as necessary for the GM as for the player.

Still, if you don't have enough photocopies of the logs – or just want some connected in a book – and can't stand the thought of using anything but a *Universe* screen for *Universe* (and the $8 price tag doesn't deter you), you might find this accessory of some value.

–William A. Barton

VEHICULAR BASE LOADS (Timeline); $5.95. Play aid for *The Morrow Project*. 36 8½" x 11" 3-hole punched sheets, in envelope. Published 1981.

This gaming accessory for Timeline's *The Morrow Project* is a revised version of the original gamemaster's package of vehicular base loads. It contains 3 sheets for each different vehicle type which may be in use by Morrow Project teams. Each sheet lists the various types of weaponry and the amount of ammo for each vehicle on the front, except for the Mars-One vehicle and the Scientific-One vehicle, both of which are so heavily armed that weaponry covers front *and* back. On the back of most of the vehicle sheets are the basic stores and supplies carried. The listing for the Mars vehicle supply is on the back of the HAAM suit sheet and the Scientific-One and Airscout supplies are back to back on separate sheets.

The basic load sheets are especially handy for use for the Morrow vehicles. Every weapon listed has a series of stars, each of which represents a single shot or burst to show exactly how much ammo the gun has before it becomes necessary to reload. The sheets are 3-hole punched, too, and can be fit into a notebook for use, avoiding a lot of flipping around in the rulebook to find out just what each vehicle can do.

The only problems I see with the sheets is the minor inconvenience of having the airscout and Scientific-One supplies listed on the same sheet, with the HAAM suit weaponry listed a second time with the airscout supplies. Since the back of the airscout weaponry sheet is blank, supplies could have easily been listed there.

If you're a *Morrow Project* GM, you should find these VEHICULAR BASE LOADS sheets of use in your campaigns.

–William A. Barton

MINIATURES

TRAVELLER MINIATURES (Citadel Miniatures); $2.95/set of 20 figures. 15mm miniatures for *Traveller*. Released 1981.

Citadel Miniatures-UK has released their own approved-for-*Traveller* 15mm miniatures. Five boxed sets of *Traveller* figures have been released initially – Adventurers, The Military, Ship's Crew, Citizens, and Aliens. All figures in a set are different and all are excellently molded. The figures "look" real and make games visually attractive.

There is something for every situation and taste in these five packs, from mercenaries to robots and from patrons to aliens. Actually, the aliens are probably the best buy, especially if players regularly play alien characters – Vargr, Aslan and Droyne. No Hivers or Centaurs are available yet, but I hear that these are on the way.

Compared with other *Traveller* lines I've seen, Citadel easily leads the field. These figures are excellent additions to a *Traveller* collection, particularly as they come in *Traveller*-sized boxes and include foam padding – essential, considering the way many people treat their miniatures. I heartily recommend these figure packs to all science fiction miniature enthusiasts.

–Robert McMahon

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COMPUTER GAMES

ALKEMSTONE (Level-10); $39.95. 48K disk for the Apple. 1 player; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

"Level-10 is offering $5,000 to the first person who discovers the location of the Alkemstone." To discover the location, one explores a graphic dungeon and attempts to decipher the clues on the walls, floor and ceiling. The clues take the form of drawings and short phrases.

This is not a game; it's a puzzle. Your "character" has neither attributes nor equipment, and has nothing to do but wander around this empty dungeon, looking at the walls. The whole thing is only the size of a single level on the *Wizardry* disk. I wonder why Level-10 needed both sides of a floppy disk for such a simple program.

Don't buy this one unless you seriously intend to win the five thou *and* have a high tolerance for boredom.

–Forrest Johnson

CrimeLords

On a planet without law, only one Dynasty can reign supreme. Will it be yours?

CrimeLords is a play-by-mail game in which players try to increase their power using force, corruption, and diplomacy. Using assassins, troopers, spies, and other servants as your tools, you attempt to control as much as you can. It won't be easy, because the other CrimeLords are trying to do the same thing.

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DRAGON'S EYE (Automated Simulations); $24.95. Designed by Robert Leyland. For Apple II with disk – 48K. Boxed computer game with 32 page rulebook, 5¼" disk, and cardstock rules and command summary. 1 player; playing time 30-60 minutes. Published 1981.

DRAGON'S EYE is a computerized fantasy role-playing game. The player takes the role of a spell-using adventurer hired by the "Good Wizard" to find the legendary Dragon's Eye. The player is given 21 days (three weeks) to search throughout the 40 sectors of the seven provinces of the Good Magician's realm. The search procedure is fairly simple and straightforward. The adventurer moves from one sector to the next, usually stopping for a turn or two in each to conduct a search. This can turn up anything from a scroll of spells to the Dragon's Eye (or one of the other nine "Treasures of Incalculable Value") to some useless Gumboot to nothing at all. This procedure is quite simple but this simplicity is deceptive. A sector might have to be searched a number of times before anything is found, or it might be searched forever without revealing anything of use. Furthermore, as the adventurer searches, he or she is frequently attacked by monsters. The first few times the game is played the monsters seem deadly (I was killed five times in my first game before the computer mercifully let me stay dead), but with experience, most of them become fairly easy to kill. This, then, is the sequence of play: move to a new sector, search it a few times, fight off any monsters which appear, and move on. But things are really not so simple. Before the game starts there is a choice of 4 weapons and 16 names. Each weapon affects the adventurer's combat ability and tactics selection while the name affects a variety of things (especially initial selection of spells) in a subtle and unexplained fashion. Then there are the spells (15 altogether) which affect various aspects of the game. For example, the Time Travel spell allows the adventurer to travel up to seven days forward or backward in time. The Knowledge spell increases the efficiency of searches. The all-important Locate Eye spell specifies in which of the seven provinces the Dragon's Eye is located.

The game has far too many strong points to include them all in a capsule review. The strongest point is that it takes a great many games before DRAGON'S EYE is mastered. Finally, the game's rulebook, which is written in a strange and pseudoarchaic style, is something of a surprise. When I first read it I was annoyed; later I decided that it added atmosphere.

The game's only weak point is that a first-time player will find the game extremely frustrating due to the strange rulebook and the apparent difficulty of the objectives. After playing the game twice I was extremely bored, and I put the game away for several weeks before giving it another try. When I did, I became hooked and I spent the next two weeks playing the game whenever I had any spare time.

Overall, this is a very good game and I recommend it. I do think it is overpriced, but I feel that way about all computer games.

–Rudy Kraft

EPOCH (Sirius Software); $34.95. 48K disk for the Apple. One player; playing time 1-30 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1981.

EPOCH is Sirius' answer to Atari's *Star Raiders*. The object of the game is simple; the galaxy is being overrun by enemy ships, and you are to destroy as many of them as you can. Unlike many other games of this type, a hit from an enemy ship does not destroy you; rather, you lose some of your precious fuel.

Strategy plays an important part in EPOCH. Players are limited by three factors: fuel, time, and ammunition. Running out of any of these will end the game. Fuel and ammunition are replenished by docking at a friendly base; time can be restored by running the gauntlet of a time warp.

The graphics in this game are what make EPOCH stand out. Players are presented with a three-dimensional display of space; moving through this space causes the starfield and enemy ships to scurry past. Ships also get larger as one approaches them; this adds to the 3-D effect. Motion on the screen is extremely smooth, among the best I have seen for the Apple. Sound effects, especially opening and closing music, add to the game.

The problems with EPOCH are minor, at worst. If you use a b/w monitor, it is hard to distinguish enemy and friendly bases, at least at far range. Also, it is strange that it is easier to destroy a ship at long range than at close range.

Overall, though, this is an excellent game. If you like arcade-type games, EPOCH is a must; it's among the best out for the Apple.

–Ron Boerger

JABBERTALKY (Automated Simulations); $29.95. Designed by Norman Lane and Bernie DeKoven. 48k disk for the Apple, 32K disk for the TRS-80. 1-4 players; playing time 10-60 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1981.

JABBERTALKY is a "programmable word game." As such, it includes three games and a method of creating your own vocabulary for use in these games.

Free Verse is not really a game; it displays sentences created at random from a pre-set vocabulary. These sentences usually make little sense, for example "Always embrace the rubber duck." Alphagrammar is merely "Hangman" applied to a whole sentence; players are presented a letter count (3 As, 2 Bs, etc.) and must guess where the letters are in the sentence. Finally, Cryptogrammar is more or less a standard cryptogram exercise. Both Alphagrammar and Cryptogrammar include a scoring system to allow competition.

The unique feature of JABBERTALKY is that it allows players to create and use their own vocabulary and sentence patterns. These patterns are used to generate the random sentences used in the three games.

Unfortunately, JABBERTALKY has its problems. The worst becomes obvious when reading the instruction booklet; it is almost impossible to figure out what to do. The rules are written in an Alice-in-Computerland format which is very stifling. This is extremely bad when a player tries to figure out just how to create a vocabulary and sentence patterns. Also bad is the amount of time the program requires; it's extremely slow.

Unless you are (a) crazy about word games, (b) want to buy every game for the Apple, or (c) both of the above, don't waste your money on this one.

–Ron Boerger

VOYAGE OF THE VALKYRIE (Advanced Operating Systems, 450 St. John Rd., Suite 792, Michigan City, IN 46360); $34.95 tape, $39.95 disk. Designed by Leo Christopherson. 16K tape or disk for the TRS-80, 48K disk for the Apple. 1 player; playing time 30-60 minutes. Can be saved. Published 1981.

You pilot the ship *Valkyrie* on its mission to subdue the ten castles of the island Fugloy. Your ship is defined by an energy level and a location on an 8 x 10 grid. Both movement and combat drain energy, mandating frequent trips to base (near the center of the grid) to refuel. The terrain of a grid location is either land or sea. Mountains may or may not obstruct movement between any two given locations. Fog obscures portions of the grid, causing fatalities as you fly into the mountains or ocean. When the *Valkyrie* enters a location which includes a castle, there is combat with a varying number of "birds," which flap across the screen. There are five kinds of birds, but they all look alike on the monitor. Besides the birds defending the castles, there is a Fugloy Air Force which can pounce on you in any seemingly vacant location. Selections from Wagner enliven the *Valkyrie*'s convoluted progress.

This is one of the few attempts I have seen to combine an arcade game with a strategy/exploration game. It is definitely the most successful. The birds flap around quite gracefully. The music is appropriate. The single-paddle targeting takes a bit of getting used to, but I prefer it to the usual, double-paddle system. The documentation is flawless.

VOYAGE was originally designed for the TRS-80, and the limitations of that machine are apparent. The graphics are 2-D, and there is no color. As a compromise, VOYAGE is not as exciting as *Missile Command,* nowhere near as challenging as *The Shattered Alliance.*

VOYAGE OF THE VALKYRIE is a novel arcade game, more valuable to TRS-80 users than those who game on the Apple. (For more on this game, see *Deus Ex Machina,* p. 16.)

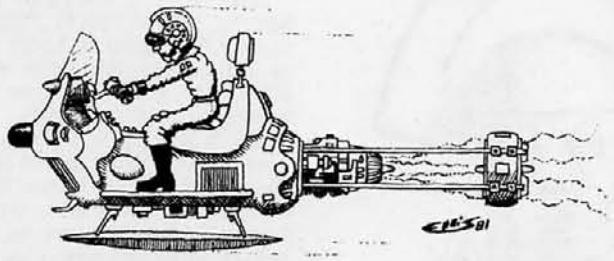
–Forrest Johnson

PLAY BY MAIL

STAR CLUSTER ONE (The Buchanan Company); $3/turn, $4/setup, $3 rulebook. Designed by Steve Jackson. Between 50 and 300 players in each game; game continues until one player owns 10% of everything (which may never occur). Begun in 1981.

A star cluster is just recovering from a supernova blast. Each player starts out with a star with a base(s) and a ship(s). He also has a small list of known stars and their x-y-z coordinates plus a supply of stored-up build points with which to build modules. Modules are the heart of the game. There are two kinds, base and ship, and these come in a variety of types: energy plants, which produce energy; cells, which store energy; drives, which propel ships; and a host of others. Players start with a random assortment of these modules, which may be arranged (and rearranged) into troop ships, fighting ships, probe ships, etc., depending on how the modules are arranged. In general, bases provide and store energy and build new modules. Ships use energy to power their drives; drives limit how far they can move per turn, while total energy on board determines how many turns a ship can move before re-energizing. The sequence of play places movement before module transfer – thus you must have your ship ready the turn before you want it to move.

This game has some solid innovations. It has a three-dimensional universe. Modular ships are not only chrome – they make a player's fleet very flexible if he needs to shift from exploration to combat or vice versa. The sequence of play forces players to plan ahead. Factories are worth build points, while modules have a build point cost: the nice touch here is that modules may be partially built (say, 8 out of 10 build points) and completed at a later date. Lastly, the relationship between energy production at bases, storage at bases, and storage and energy use on ships is fascinating.



Buchanan is having trouble at present: turnaround time is 6 weeks, and print-outs are now hand-typed rather than computer-printed. There have been two drastic rules revisions, which have improved the game substantially, but are unsettling. Some players will dislike the way the stars are handled (basically, parking places for bases and that's it). Others will be disappointed that ship design only goes as far as weapon and screen modules, without worrying about armor thickness, missile emplacements, or tactical fighting. I am not happy with the way orders must be coded – remembering that 145AA is my ship while 145A is my base does not come naturally. Lastly, the game is *very* slow. Starting players have two options: scouting for new stars, 10% chance per ship per turn *at best*; or striking out for one of the known stars two or more turns distant. Since the first turn is also actionless (remember the sequence of play), there will probably be little of interest until turn four. This is aided by the setup, since players will be hard put to get three ships into space at the same time.

I'm not particularly pleased with STAR CLUSTER ONE. In my opinion it could use a shot of action (for instance, doubling ship speed and setup modules) and better handling by Buchanan. Right now it is a slow game with a long turn-around time – hardly the perfect combination. Not recommended.

–W.G. Armintrout

PUBLICATIONS

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD (1919 E. Sycamore No. 203, Anaheim, CA 92805); single issue $2.75; 6 issues (1-year subscription) $11. Russell Sipe, editor. First published 1981.

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD is a brand-new publication aimed at those gamers who read *The Space Gamer* and *Creative Computing* and are satisfied with neither. It pursues all the computer angles to a degree that TSG really can't (and shouldn't) while maintaining a wargaming flavor usually lost in the computer magazines. Topics pursued include video arcade games, computer wargaming, and reviews of all that software available for your Apple/Atari/Radio Shack/whatever.

I was generally impressed with the first issue of CGW. The lead article was on computer wargaming and was written by Chris Crawford, author of *Eastern Front,* (a slick WWII wargame for the Atari). There were a number of reviews, both full-length and capsule. A *Robotwar* contest was announced, and there were the usual news-and-rumors sections. The physical quality, layout, and artwork are about a dead-even level with *The Space Gamer,* and there were (of course) lots of ads for computer games.

My only criticism of the magazine is the paucity of honest-to-goodness articles; outside of the one by Crawford, there just wasn't much. However, that is understandable for a first issue, and Russell Sipe, the editor, is actively soliciting manuscripts (payment is 2 cents/word).

Stolen

On Sunday, December 6, approximately $15,000 worth of microcomputer equipment was stolen from the Canoga Park, CA offices of Edu-Ware Services, Inc. The predawn burglary, now under investigation by local authorities, occurred only days before the software publishing house was scheduled to relocate its operations.

A spokesman for Edu-Ware stated that the theft was "probably not an inside job . . . evidence suggests the thieves were unfamiliar with procedures for disassembling a unit." The company is only temporarily hobbled with one printer and several computers remaining.

Edu-Ware is issuing descriptions and serial numbers of all stolen equipment to computer stores, distributors, and the press in hopes of recovering the units and apprehending the thieves. Any assistance in this matter is appreciated. Stolen equipment includes:

One Diablo 1620 Hytype printer serial no. CS10008.

One Apple II standard computer revision 1 board serial no. unknown.

One Apple II Plus computer, serial no. A2S2-185708.

One Apple II Plus computer, serial no. unknown.

One Bell&Howell/Apple II Plus computer, serial no. A2S3-006294.

Six disk drives, Apple disk II, serial nos.: A2M3-00325, A2M3-23514, A2M3-139070, A2M3-214443, A2M3-(unknown), A2M3-(unknown).

One Hitachi/Amdek 13" color monitor.

One Panacolor 11" color monitor (Japanese markings) serial no. TQF15626.

One Video 100/Amdek B&W 13" monitor.

One Sanyo green screen monitor (mod no. DM5112CX) serial no. 65002370.

One Samsung 13" color TV serial no. 19588.

One Sanyo TRC 8010A memo-scriber serial no. T86130222.

Anyone with information about this stolen equipment is encouraged to contact Steven Pederson at (213) 706-0661.

I strongly recommend this magazine to computer gamers, and just one reason alone will (in my opinion) suffice: You can now start getting from just one publication the information that you've been having to dig out of three or four or five (or six . . .). Get it.

–Bruce F. Webster

THE NUTS & BOLTS OF PBM (Bolt Publications, 3753 W. 80th Pl., Chicago, IL 60652); $1/issue, $4.50/year, $18.65/5 years (prices go up in February). Bimonthly. Richard J. Buda, editor. 8½" x 11", 16 pages, not typeset. In publication since June, 1980.

NUTS & BOLTS is a review, tactics, and news magazine about play-by-mail games. Regular features are New Games, Editor's Column, Gamespace (contests about PBM games), and Letters; reviews, short stories, tactics articles and interviews are irregular but major features. This takes up 60% of the magazine, the rest being advertising.

It's about time an all-PBM magazine came out! N&B has very good listings of new games (though it missed a few); it also has interesting contests, covers most of the major PBM games, has a fiery Letters column, and goes the second mile to get interviews with PBM game moderators and designers.

Unfortunately, the flavor is amateurish. Although the new game listings are the best I've seen in any magazine, the follow-up reviews are plain bad – leaving out major details (including, on one occasion, the name of the game being reviewed!) and taking a superficial look (many seemed to have been written by players who hadn't received their first turn yet). Tactics discussed were idiotic (bribing players to drop out of the game, using the WATS line at work to make long-distance calls). The Letters column has a tendency to be dominated by crackpots who think some game company is out to get them. Lastly, I was dismayed to find a 4-page short story in a 16-page magazine (and that was just Part 1!).

This magazine is a disappointment. NUTS & BOLTS needs contributors who have something to say and know how to say it. I can't recommend this magazine until it shapes up.

–W.G. Armintrout

PBM Update

BEYOND THE STELLAR EMPIRE (Adventures By Mail)

Company News: Adventures By Mail notified our players of a turn slowdown period during the month of December. This time was used to develop several new areas of the game including agents, blackmarkets and many new data sheets and blurbs. In addition, programming was begun on our next game which we hope to be totally computer-moderated. In expectation of an additonal demand for computer time to playtest this game, we have acquired yet another complete microcomputer system.

Game News: New Imperial Charters have been granted to Whitehold Colony Enterprises and Quasar Food Production. The charters will take effect on week 1 of 182. Both companies have been negotiating with various independent (IND) colonies for possible purchase.

Both the GTT and SMS claim they have erected the first new colony to be located in the Capellan Periphery in over a year. These colonies are named GTT Tortuga and SMS Spartan.

The AFT Valaskjalf conducted a daring raid at the ISP penal colony and successfully masterminded the escape of pirate Starcaptain Ramaden. This earned the Valaskjalf a place on the posted list of the Imperial Stellar Patrol.

Colonists at SSL colony AX held a violent demonstration following the murder of dozens of people aboard the SSL Kalgan. Most of the colonists participating in the riot are believed to have been on their way to an SMS colony site aboard the Kalgan.

A reporter for the Capellan Periphery Times was found dead in the starport area of the IND colony Wurth. She was sent there to investigate alleged corruption in the colony government there. Colony spokesmen maintain this was suicide, but the body was disposed of prior to the arrival of an ISP investigation team.

The Blackstar Brotherhood appears to be challenging the Brethren on several fronts and is competing with them for new members. Meanwhile the Space Women's Association of Traders (SWAT) is rapidly growing in political influence due to the aid of several high-placed members.

–Robert Cook

UNIVERSE II (Clemens & Associates)

Game News:

Quadrant I. The Eohippean Alliance has used its growing strength to control the area above Arcturus. Regajian expansion has pushed the Empire borders to within a few sectors of Vindemiatrix.

Quadrant II. The Horde is making gains against the established alliances. The location of the Phalanx and the purpose behind its minelaying activities is still unknown.

Quadrant III. It is rumored that Unity ships are in the Muar Empire. It isn't known if they are joining the Muar or assembling for an attack.

Quadrant IV. The Regajian Empire has managed to rebuild bases lost last year and their fleets now patrol the Empire borders.

–Jon Clemens

CRIMELORDS (Gamers Unlimited)

Game News: Conflict has again broken out in the inner sectors. The House of Taylor, champion of many of the weaker territories, was attacked in a series of vicious raids made by the powerful Tjarkin Dynasty. Each of the three hit-and-run raiding forces consisted of three armored hovercraft bearing four paratroopers each. The Tjarkin forces escaped before Count Taylor's guards could reach the scene. The raids resulted in 298 citizens dead and could have serious repercussions on the House of Taylor. Already the populace of Count Taylor's territory are having doubts about his ability to protect them and their "Donations" have slacked off. If something is not done, open revolt might start. Count Taylor's allies have refused him aid, fearing Tjarkin reprisals. The popular opinion is that the House of Taylor will soon be assaulted by an overwhelming Tjarkin battlefront, whose aim will be the total decimation of Taylor forces and the subjugation of the Count's lands. If the Tjarkin regiment, led by their leader, The Awesome One, is victorious over the House of Taylor, all the territories in the inner sectors can look forward to being subsidiaries or slaves, or paying tribute to the mighty Tjarkin Dynasty.

THE TRIBES OF CRANE (Schubel & Son)

Company News: We are in the process of developing a new second generation, fully computerized, play-by-mail space battle game. We expect it to be completed around April, 1982.

We have a new edition of The Tribes of Crane rule book available to all *players* of the game for $1.00 mailed first class.

Game News: Both Crane I and Crane II have seen several small outbreaks of plague among the large herds of some tribes. Fast action by the chiefs of most of the tribes prevented the spread of the plague.

On Crane I the First Empire attacked the city of Istor in an attempt to recapture it from the Horde which had taken the city in October, 1980. By the end of the battle, the First Empire held only a portion of the city. The western half of Istor to the city leader's palace was held by the First Empire. The eastern half was still held by allies of Istor and the brave female city leader, Catahoula. Their troops had thrown up street barricades on all major roads to the eastern half of the city. What direction the battle will take is yet to be seen.

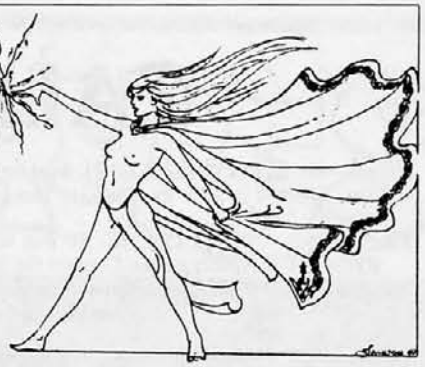
Two other cities on Crane I fell without bloodshed. In the city of Alab, the Councilman Stinemetz and his court were successful in a coup against the caravan merchant Shaman Remlock and the wandering Shaman Rehak. The city of Bic surrendered without a fight to a large Grand Union force led by its previous Kinglord Lyreddwn. Lyreddwn had escaped the city before it fell to a large Horde Army nearly a year earlier. Since that time the Horde had lost much of its previous strength after the death of its greatest leader, Muad'Dib. Now, after a long naval blockade of its port and weak Horde city leadership, the city was ready to return to the Grand Union. As Lyreddwn entered the city he was met by a cheering chorus of those who remembered his fair and just rule.

On Crane II the small south polar city of Nanda was overwhelmed and plundered by a force called the Southern Clan. There is a rumor that the Valorous Ice Army is marching to retake the city.

–George Schubel

PBM Update reports on professionally-moderated play-by-mail games. Notices are monthly. Copy deadline is 60 days previous to the first of the month, for the issue in which the notice is to appear. (Deadline for the July issue is May 1.) All copy should be typed and double-spaced. Notices should not exceed 200 words in length. TSG reserves the right to edit copy as necessary.

LETTERS



Just saw your review of *Wizardry*, and would like to thank you for publishing it. At the same time, I would like to try and answer some of your questions/critiques.

First of all, the *Wizardry* system is a lot more than "Hack Hack Kill Kill Loot Loot Map Map Run Run." However, "Proving Grounds" is an introductory scenario, and is designed to teach you the basic skills needed to conduct expeditions, and so has only a few puzzles. "Knight of Diamonds," the forthcoming scenario, has as many puzzles as any adventure.

Secondly, while there are some things that sentence parsing can do that single key options cannot, one of the things I cannot stand about adventures is that you are always searching for the right word. *Wizardry* always lets you know what you can do at any point, and is capable of allowing just as many branching options as any adventure, except usually you have to type less.

You are correct that there were some minor datafile bugs in the program, and as these are reported, they have been fixed. As for thieves, they can't use large shields, but can use magic shields. There was a typo calling the +1 shield large. The two rooms that had no exits have been fixed, and all the other open spaces were intentional (with one-way doors out).

Now for the interesting news – we are releasing a new version of "Proving Grounds" with many improvements, including – multiple scenario sides – full backup and recovery – no 10 year aging – ability to disband a party in the maze and rescue them with another party – ability to update old versions to the new one! We are the first software house to develop and implement a way in which the owners of the new version of our game can upgrade old disks for owners of old versions. Stores are very pleased at this and are cooperating in letting their customers know of the service.

As to your crashing problems – with 4000 disks in the field, we have had occasional people with problems like yours. In some cases it was the fault of a marginal diskette, in other cases it was hardware, it most it was hardware glitching a disk. In not one case has the program crashed due to a bug! And in all cases, we replaced the disk (usually free) and got the customer going again.

Robert T. Woodhead
Sir-tech Software

Having read your reviews of *SwordThrust* and *Wizardry*, I would like to make a few comments. First, a brief synopsis of my computer gaming for reference: I have played only on large mainframes and am basically unable to get access to a micro. On the mainframes, I have played oodles of Adventure-style games.

First, a minor point about "data" entry. In both reviews, you basically state that you think sentence parsing is superior to single keystrokes because of the flexibility. I have used both types of command structures, and would like to point out that while parsing is, in general, more flexible, often that flexibility is not needed. In combat, for example, the options available are relatively limited. You can (assuming a TFT-style option system) move, throw spells, attack with your current weapon, change weapons, etc. These types of commands are easily incorporated into single keystrokes. If "f" means fight, the computer program is smart enough to figure out that I want to fight with my sword (in my hand) and not my bow (slung on my back). I find it very frustrating, with parsers, to have to type out things like "attack dwarf with axe" every single blasted time. When slightly more flexibility is required, as in using one of several potions, scrolls, etc., in combat, something like "u" tells the computer you want to use an item, and it can then come back and ask which one. This still requires a lot less typing than "drink potion of healing." In one game on the PLATO system here, spells are thrown simply by pressing the number key corresponding to the spell (which could be expanded further by using the "number" *and* "shift" keys). The main point is that single keystrokes offer a good deal of flexibility, more than adequate for most cases, while retaining ease of use.

Another point is that for a sentence parser to be *truly* flexible requires a lot of program space and a *large* vocabulary. What usually happens is that you basically find out what vocabulary is present, then use combinations of those words to solve the puzzles. Direct control via keystrokes is much faster.

In the end, however, it must be admitted that a parser is ultimately more flexible. What I would like to see is a combination of the two. When in combat (or "normal" situations) single keystrokes (or single keystrokes with a short "tag" such as "u," and the computer asks which item, etc.) for known actions are the best. If you wish to try something not in the "regular" options, one of the keys could be used to call in a parser. Most of the people around here agree that this is the best way to combine speed and ease of use with flexibility.

Charlie Allen
Champaign, IL

Reply to Lewis Pulsipher (Letters, TSG 47):

Lew, I still stand by my original review.

First, I said that *Adventure Gaming* ignored science fiction *board*games (last time I checked, *Traveller* was a role-playing game). This is important to those boardgamers who detest role-playing games.

Second, the first issue of any magazine is prepared without any deadline pressure. It is the "best foot forward," a self-advertisement that should state what the magazine is all about and why I should buy it. An uneven issue with colorless (i.e., dull) material doesn't cut it.

Finally, a review is a description *with analysis.* No reviewer worth his salt tells readers to come to their own conclusion. They will do that anyway – the reviewer's job is to present *his* opinion, clearly and without hedging his bets.

So you subscribe, and I'll save my money.

W.G. Armintrout
Toole, Utah

NEWS & PLUGS

The latest from Strategic Simulations: *Napoleon's Campaigns,* a corps-level game with maps and counters, $59.95. Also: *Southern Command,* a battalion-level simulation of the Israeli attack across Suez in 1973, $39.95. Both games available on disk for the 48K Apple II.

New computer games from Discovery Games: *Dawn Patrol* and *Chennault's Flying Tigers.* Upcoming: A character generator for *Traveller* and a game assistance package for *Time Tripper.* Discovery's *Guns of Fort Defiance* has been sold to Avalon Hill.

Dwarfstar games scheduled for release in late March: *Star Smuggler* (by Dennis Sustare), *Dragon Rage,* (by Lewis Pulsipher), *Grav Armor* (by Arnold Hendrick), and *Goblin* (by Howard Barasch).

The Midkemia Press has published the second edition of *Cities,* which is much more professional-looking than the first.

Wind Warrior Co. (P.O. Box 231, Short Hills, NJ 07078) offers the martial arts card game *Grand Master.*

T-Rex has produced a Continental Siege Unit for their *Space Opera* miniature line, weighing 21 ounces. Price: $15.00.

Flying Buffalo has published its *Tunnels & Trolls 1982 Calendar.* Price: $3.00.

FGU is planning a magazine about *Space Opera.* First issue is scheduled for early 1982.

Everybody's Doing It: Reilly Associates announces the quarterly *Variant,* "devoted to game variants and playing aids." The first issue will appear March 1, 1982. Price: $1.50. Subscription: $4.00.

Gray Cat Castings has merged with Task Force Games, and plans a line of *Star Fleet Battles* miniatures for release in March.

A character generation program for T&T is available on cassette for the TRS-80. Price: $10.00, Also from Flying Buffalo: A second edition of *The Dungeon of the Bear,* at $6.95.

TSR is not renewing its membership in the Games Manufacturers Association, and will no longer attend the GAMA-sponsored convention Origins. Company officials say GAMA has not been productive, and has failed to promote the gaming hobby, as it was chartered to do.

Future and Fantasy Games has changed its name to Gamer's Guild. It will continue to sell *Hyper Battle,* but its main business will be distributing discount games to Guild members.

CALENDAR

February 5-7: GENCON SOUTH VI. Wargaming con. Contact at P.O. Box 16371, Jacksonville, FL 32216.

February 5-7: VIKING CON III. SF con with RPGs and computer games. Contact the Science Fiction & Fantasy Club, Viking Union 22, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA 98225.

February 5-7: WARCON. RPGs, boardgames, etc. Contact David (Kong) Heiligmann, Chairman – Warcon '82, P.O. Box J-1, College Station, TX 77844, 713-845-1515.

February 12-14: MAINECON '82. RPGs, boardgames, historical miniatures, etc. Contact John Wheeler, Mainecon '82 Director, 245 Water St., Bath, ME 04530.

February 12-15: MANNHEIMER-CON '82. Miniatures, board games. Mannheim Middle School in Mannheim, West Germany. Contact Grenadierstrausse Kriegspiel Society, 181st Trans Bn, APO NY 09166.

February 13-15: DUNDRA CON VI. SF & RPG con. Dunfey Hotel, San Mateo, CA. Contact at 386 Alcatraz Ave., Oakland, CA 94618.

February 13-14: GAMES FAIRE. Family games, boardgames, computer games, etc. Contact the Book and Game Company, W. 621 Mallon, Spokane, WA 99201.

February 13-15: ORCCON '82. Strategy games. Sheraton-Anaheim Hotel near Disneyland. Contact @ Orccon, PR Dept., P.O. Box 2577, Anaheim, CA 92804.

February 19-21: KAWARTHA CON. Contact c/o deBy's Hobby Emporium, P.O. Box 1552, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada K9J 7H7.

March 12-14: FANTASYLAIR '82. RPGs, boardgames, war simulations, costume fantasy ball. Contact Northern Oklahoma Dungeoneers, P.O. Box 241, Ponca City, OK 74602-0241.

April 2-4: MAVCON '82. SF&F, wargaming. Contact @ P.O. Box 19348-50 University of Texas, Arlington Station, Arlington, TX 76014.

April 8-11: SCIENCE FICTION WEEKEND. SF con with RPGs and computer games. Contact @ Fantasy Publishing Company, 1855 W. Main St., Alhambra, CA 91801.

April 23-25: CONTRETEMPS. SF con. Contact Contretemps, P.O. Box 12373, Omaha, NE 68112.

May 28-30: CONQUEST III. SF&F con with D&D and TFT tournaments. Contact @ P.O. Box 32055, Kansas City, MO 64111.

May 28-31: GRIMCON IV. RPG con. Contact @ P.O. Box 4153, Berkeley, CA 94704.

May 30: M.I.G.S. III. Free wargaming sessions, seminars, etc. Contact Les Scanlon, President M.I.G.S., 473 Upper Wentworth St., Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L9A 4T6.

June 5-6: GENGHIS CON IV. Games, miniatures, auction. Contact Denver Gamers Association, Box 2945, Littleton, CO 80161.

June 11-13: MICHICON. To be held in Detroit. Contact @ P.O. Box 787, Troy, MI 48099.

June 18-20: HOUSTONCON '82. Nostalgia, SF&F. Contact L-5 Society, P.O. Box 713, Stafford, TX 77477-0713.

June 18-20: SF CON V (formerly CONEBULUS). Science fiction con with wargaming. Contact at 337 Hartford Rd., Syracuse, NY 13208.

August 6-8: TEXCON 1982. D&D, Car Wars, etc. For more information, send SASE to TexCon 1982, 8028 Gessner No. 1805, Austin, TX 78573.

CONVENTION ORGANIZERS – let us know about your con! Free publicity never hurts.

CONTEST

This month's contest is an exercise in creative (possibly *very* creative) writing. Send us a vignette – a story or incident, 500 words or less – based on a game. It doesn't have to be humorous . . . but that's probably the best way to be effective in so little space.

For an example of some very short vignettes, see issue 45, page 40: Aaron Allston's "Derby of Death" pieces. Another example came from Donald McKinlay along with his entry to an earlier contest. We take you now to the bridge of a Bug ship from the universe of *Starship Troopers:*

Aboard the Warp Cruiser, Mandible Destiny

On the darkened bridge of the warp cruiser, a chitinous hand flicks response lever 371 of the main computer control panel. The overhead screen glows red and purple with the messages, "Subterrestrial scan complete. Median force resistance: 89-I. Bore requirement: 36.75."

"Oooooeee, weee'll geeet those troopers now, my sweetie."

"Yees; the universe wheeel thank us. Hee, hee. The troopers wheeel bee so surprised to seee our lovleee breaches. Wee'll make them run away and hide. Weee are so scareee, hee, hee, hee. Beeegin countdown. Readeee planet bore."

"Yees, sweetie."

"15 . . . 14 . . . 13 . . ."

"Eeengage tractor beams three and seven."

"Eeengaged, sweetie."

"9 . . . 8 . . . 7 . . ."

"Launch back-hoe torpedoes."

"5 . . . 4 . . ."

"Torpedoes launched."

"3 . . . 2 . . . 1."

"Commence boring activities."

* * *

All entries will become the property of TSG. The winner will receive a 12-issue subscription; second place will win a 6-issue subscription. We will also print as many of the runners-up as space allows. Entries will be judged on a wholly subjective basis – i.e., how hard they make us laugh, cry, or groan in anguish. As always, we reserve the right to award fewer prizes if no entries of publishable quality are received. All entries must be postmarked no later than Mar. 15, 1982.

RESULTS FROM MURPHY'S RULES CONTEST

The winner of our Murphy's Rules contest was Joseph Miranda, of North Hollywood, California; he submitted no less than 21 suggestions, for which he will receive a 12-issue subscription. Second place (6 issues) goes to Stefan Jones, of Locust Valley, NY. Honorable mention goes to Joe Ciavaniri, of Woonsocket, Rhode Island. Rather than print their suggestions here, we'll run them (appropriately credited, of course) in the "Murphy's Rules" cartoon over the next few months.

For those of you who had suggestions but didn't get them to us in time: fear not. We will continue to accept readers' suggestions for "Murphy's Rules." Each suggestion we use will be good for a two-issue extension to your subscription. (If you're not a subscriber, you will be . . . for two whole issues . . . thrills!)

ADVERTISERS

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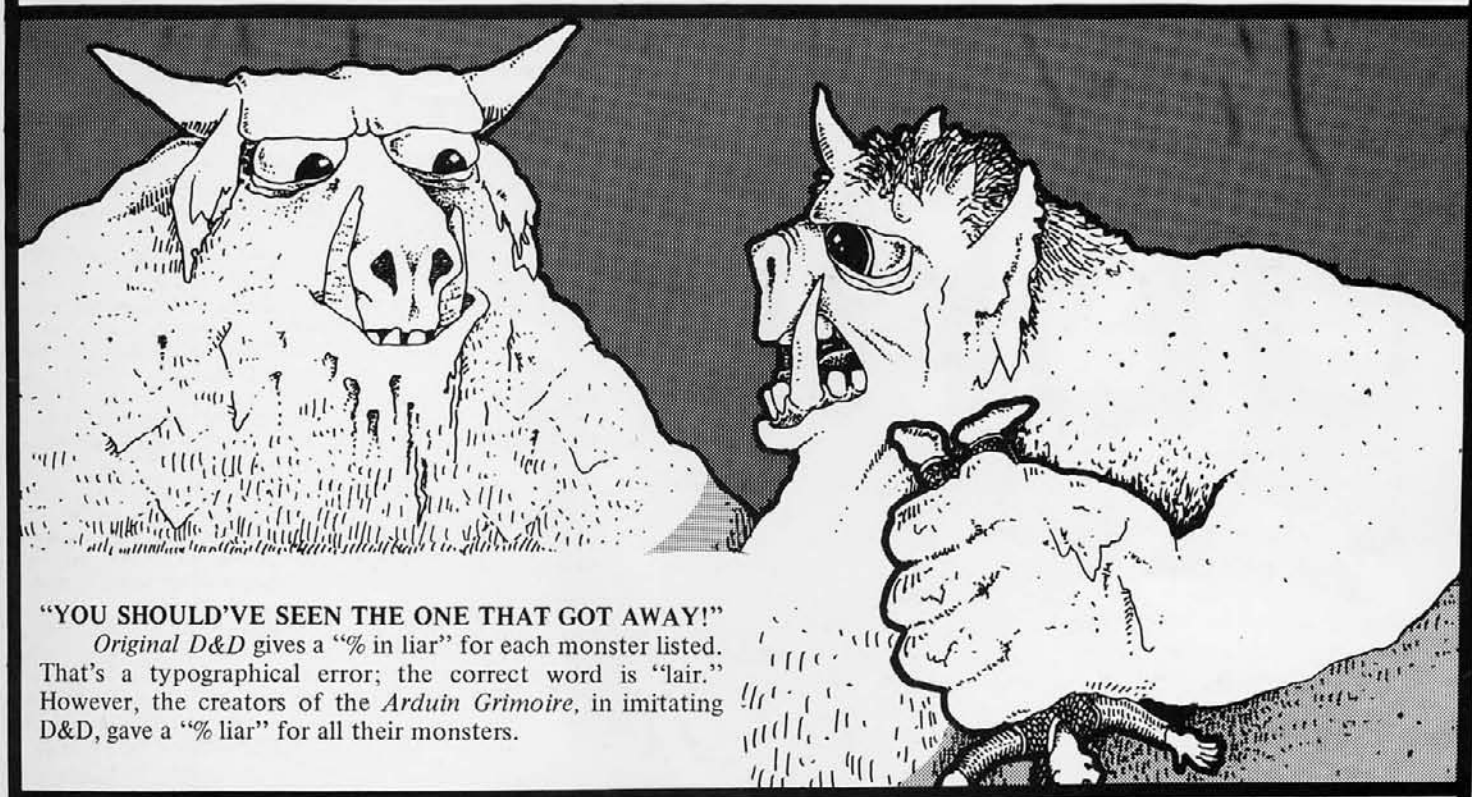
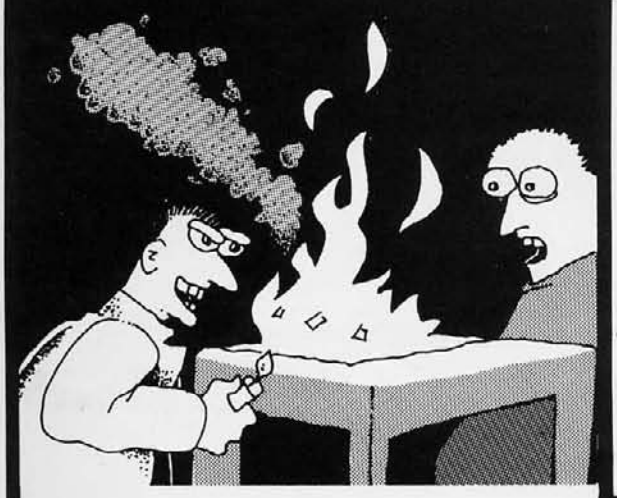
Judges Guild 33
Schubel & Son 13, 18
SJ Games . . . . . 23, *back cover*
Task Force Games . . . . . *back mailer*
T-Rex. 30
TSG. 21
Zocchi Distributors 34

MURPHY'S RULES



"YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY!"

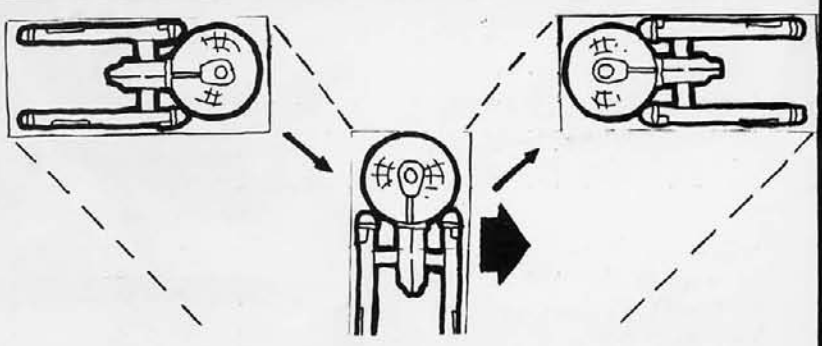
Original D&D gives a "% in liar" for each monster listed. That's a typographical error; the correct word is "lair." However, the creators of the *Arduin Grimoire*, in imitating D&D, gave a "% liar" for all their monsters.



SIZZLING SIMULATIONS

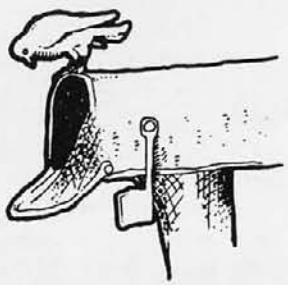
NATO includes the following: "To simulate the use of strategic nuclear weapons simply soak the map with lighter fluid and apply a flame."

Joseph Miranda



"BOOTLEGGER REVERSE, MR. SULU!"

A starship can go from Warp 6 to a dead stop simply by turning around, according to the *Star Fleet Battle Manual.*



PROMISES, PROMISES . . .

The moderator of the play-by-mail game *Lords of Valetia* considers the game active, though few if any turns have been processed in the last three years.

NOTHING CAN STOP IT...

It's a hundred feet long and programmed to kill. It's covered with guns, missiles, armor. It's as smart as a man. And it's coming back!

OGRE

OGRE and G.E.V. – the classic games of future warfare – are coming back. The new editions will have, not only updated rules, but greatly improved components (double-sided counters, full-color enlarged maps, and reference sheets for each player). The new editions of OGRE and G.E.V. will be available in early 1982, along with *The Ogre Book*(a reprint of the best OGRE articles from the early days of *The Space Gamer*) and the Charles Roberts Award-winning OGRE miniatures. They'll all be coming from the original designer of both games – Steve Jackson. Watch for them!

STEVE JACKSON GAMES